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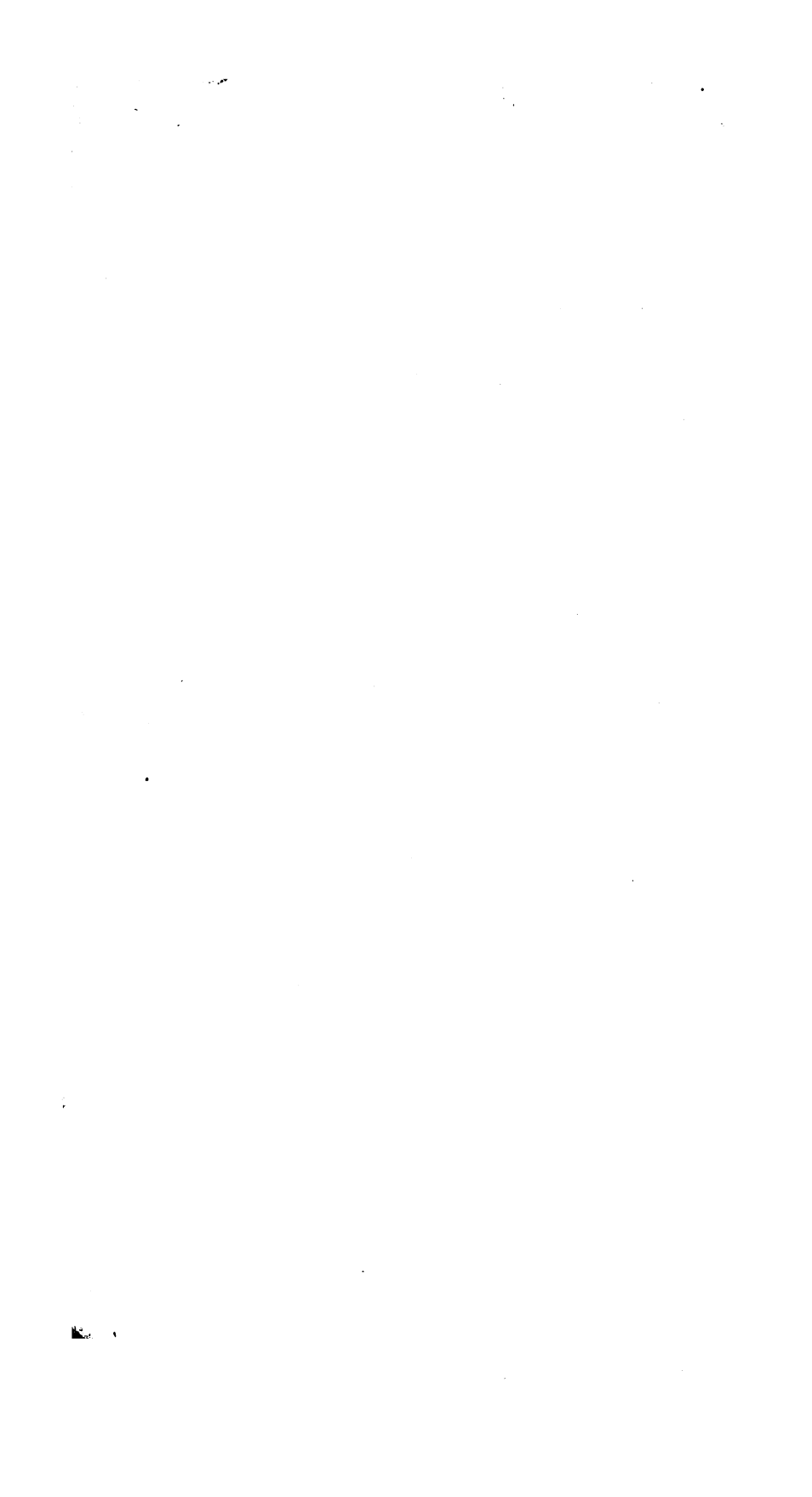


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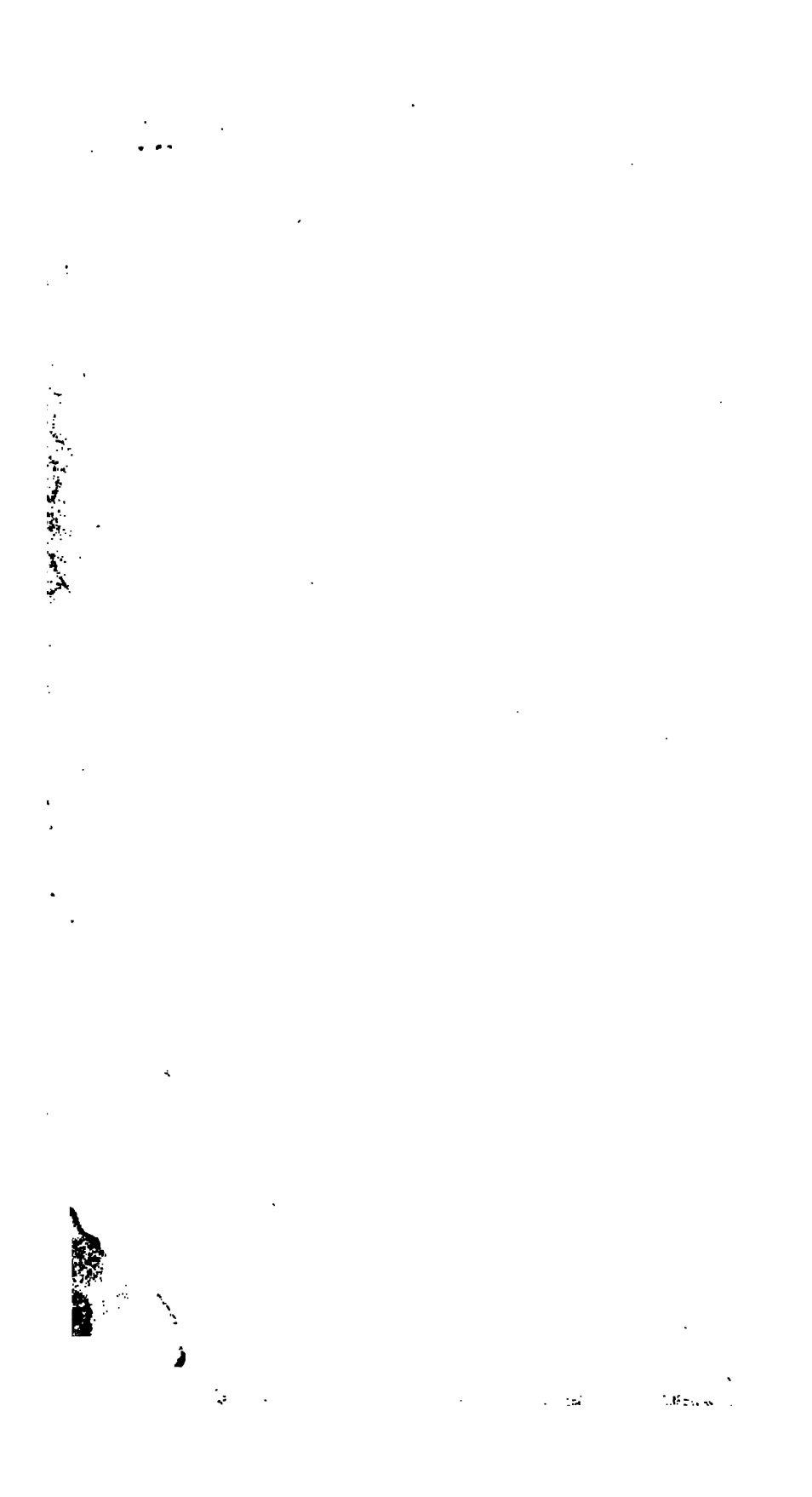


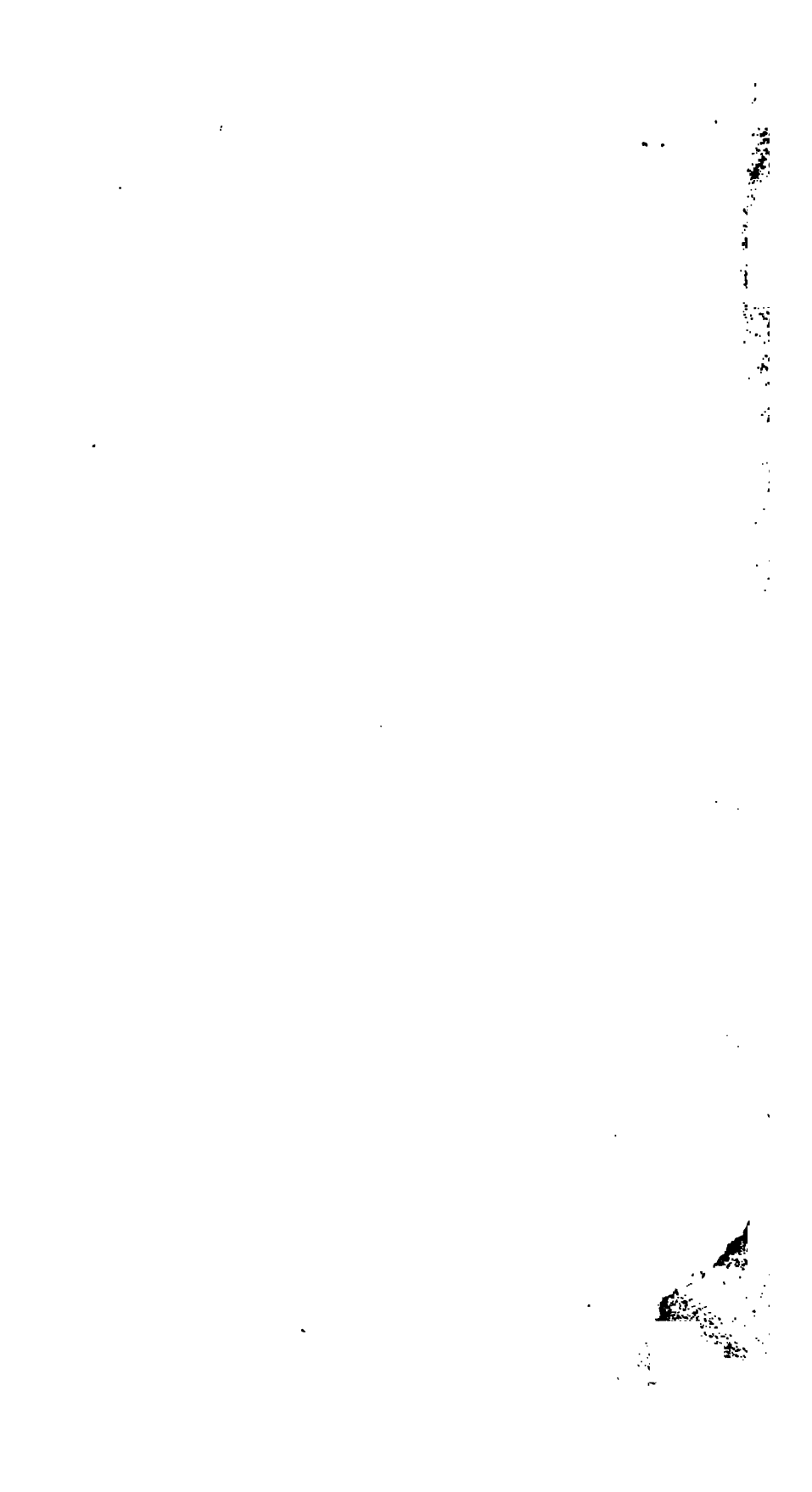


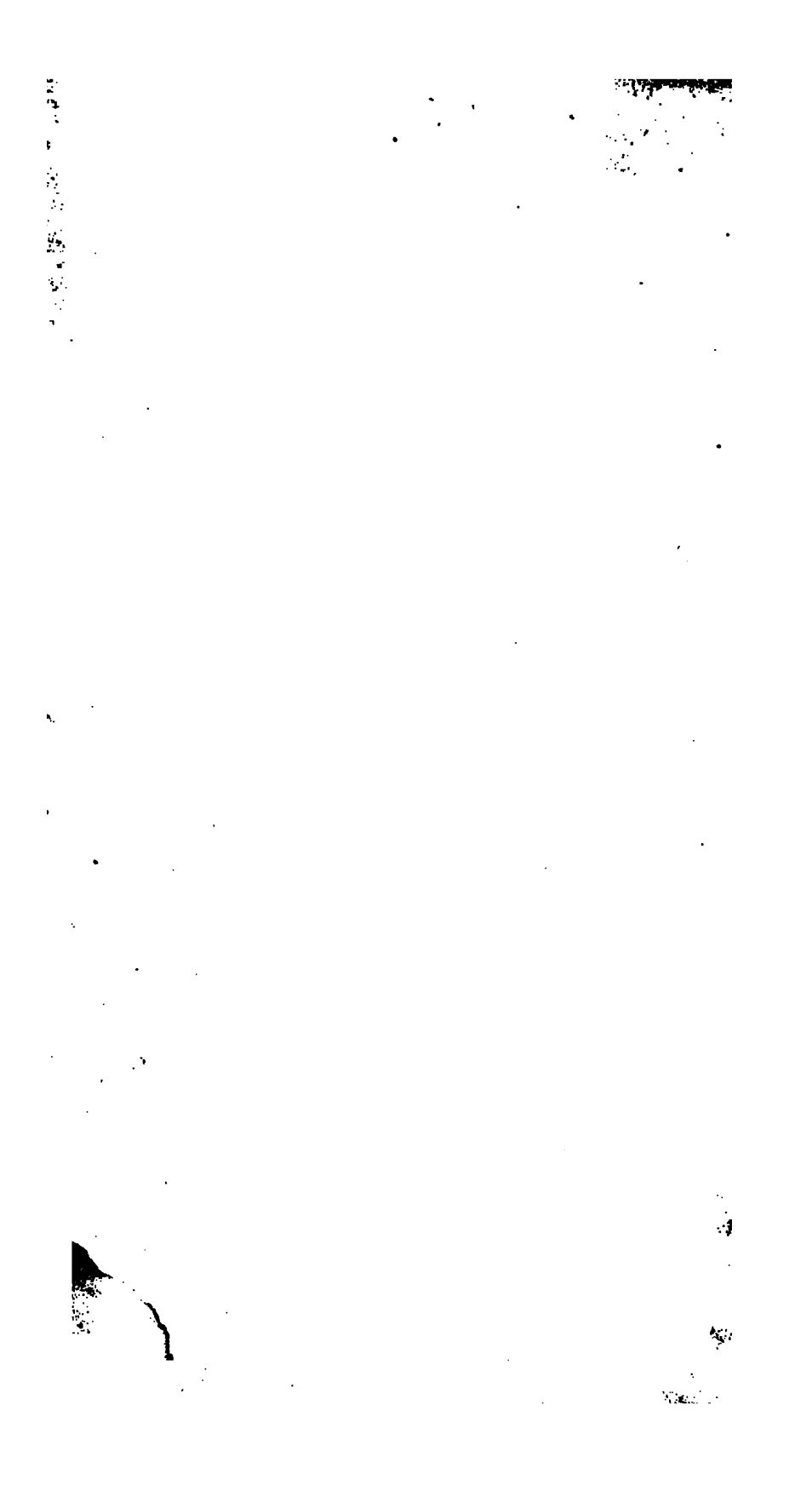
Mr. J. Gamble

(Emmons, 18)

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# SERMONS

ON

SOME OF THE FIRST

## PRINCIPLES AND DOCTRINES

OF

TRUE RELIGION.

BY NATHANAEL EMMONS, D. D.

Pastor of the Church in Franklin, (Mass.)

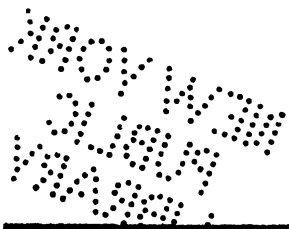
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## SERMON I.

ON THE BEING AND PERFECTIONS OF GOD.

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*For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.*

IT is not the intention of the apostle, in these words, to prove the existence of the Deity; but only to suggest the most easy and proper way of attaining the certain knowledge, of this great and fundamental truth. And taking his words in this view, they naturally introduce the object of the following discourse, which is to exhibit the evidence of the being and perfections of God. Agreeably, therefore, to the spirit of the text, and the design proposed, it may be proper to proceed gradually, and observe,

I. This world *might* have had a *beginning*. There is nothing absurd in this supposition. We can easily conceive, that there was a time when the heavens and earth did not exist; and of consequence, that there was a time when they first came into existence.—The fashion of this world passes away, and mutability is stamped upon every object with which we are acquainted. The winds, and clouds, and seas, and the whole material system are in continual motion. The varying seasons are constantly varying the face of the earth, and giving new forms and appearances to all the objects around us. One generation of mankind follows another; and whilst one is coming on, another is going off the stage of life. The numerous species of animals come and go, in a manner equally regular and rapid. The fruits of the earth

spontaneously and successively spring up, come to maturity, flourish, fade, and die. Such are the continual changes and revolutions, which are brought about by the laws of nature. And besides these, there are many others, which arise from human power and art. We find by experience, that we have a transforming influence over all material objects, and are able to change their *modes* and *forms*, at our pleasure. We can turn not only forests into fields, but mountains into plains. We can give form and figure, and polish, not only to wood, and stone, and silver, and gold; but even to pearls and diamonds. No material object has ever been found, but what could be formed and fashioned, by human power and skill. Now, if the world existed of *necessity*, it would be absolutely *immutable* or incapable of change. Neither the laws of nature, nor the powers of man, could make the least impression upon it, nor produce the least motion or variation in it. Whatever necessarily exists, must necessarily exist the same. For that necessity, which is the ground of its *existence*, must be equally and perpetually the ground of all its *modes* and *forms* of existence. Since the world, therefore, does not necessarily exist in any *certain* mode or form, it *might not* have existed in *any* mode or form *whatever*. And if it *might not* have existed at all; then we can easily conceive, that it *might* have had a *beginning* of existence, in some distant period of past duration.

II. If this world *might have begun* to exist, then it *might* have had a *cause* of its existence. Upon this principle, the apostle supposes, that "every house is builded by some man," or owes its existence to some cause. And this mode of reasoning from the *effect* to the *cause*, is perfectly agreeable to common sense. As soon as children begin to reason, they spontaneously reason from the effect to the cause; or from a

thing's beginning to exist to the cause of its existing. When they see any thing move; they imagine there is some cause of its moving. When they see any thing in motion stop; they conclude there is some cause of its stopping. When they see any thing broken; they naturally inquire, who broke it? When they find any thing out of its usual or proper place; they are prone to ask, Who put it there? Indeed, whenever they observe any thing new or uncommon, they never fail to ascribe such a visible effect to some visible or invisible cause. Nor is this mode of reasoning peculiar to children; for all persons, of every age and capacity, always reason in the same manner, unless their minds have been previously perverted, by long and habitual sophistry. Every man ascribes the motion of the winds, the flying of the clouds, the falling of rain, and the growing of grass, to some known or unknown cause. Though men in the busy scenes of life, spend very little time or thought in tracing particular effects to particular causes; yet they as clearly perceive, that every particular effect *may* have a particular cause, as the most learned and deep-thinking philosopher. It is extremely difficult for any man to help reasoning from the effect to the cause. Should the greatest skeptic travel two or three hundred miles into a wild wilderness, and there discover a very *ancient* and *elegant* house; he would instantaneously draw the conclusion, in his own mind, that that house was built by some man. In short, we intuitively perceive, that whatever *begins* to exist, *may have a cause* of its existence: If the world, therefore, *might* have had a *beginning*, it is easy and natural to conceive, that it *might have had a cause*.

III. If the world *might* have had a *cause*, then it *must have had a cause*. Some seem to scruple, wheth-

be true, then it is certain to a *demonstration*, that there was *some cause* which actually produced it. That is demonstrably false, which *cannot be conceived* to be true; and that is demonstrably true, which *cannot be conceived* to be false. It is demonstrably false, that a body can move north and south at the same time; for it is not in the power of the mind to *conceive*, that a body is moving north, while it is moving south. It is demonstrably true, that two and two are equal to four; for it is not in the power of the mind to *conceive* that two and two should be more, or less than four. It is demonstrably true, that all the parts are equal to the whole; for it is not in the power of the mind to *conceive*, that all the parts should be more, or less than the whole. And in the same manner it is demonstrably true, that the world *must* have had a *cause* of its existence. We can clearly *conceive*, that the world is *capable* of having had a *cause* of its existence; and therefore we cannot *conceive*, that it was *capable* of coming into existence, *without a cause*. The *possibility* of its having had a *cause*, destroys the *possibility* of its having come into existence *without a cause*; just as the *possibility* of a body's moving *one way* at once, destroys the *possibility* of its moving *two ways* at once. Had Hume and Kaimes properly consulted the operation of their own minds upon this subject, we presume they never would have granted, that it was *possible* for the world to have come into existence, *by a cause*; and yet asserted, that it was *possible* it might have come into existence, *without a cause*. By granting the *possibility* of the world's coming into existence, *by a cause*, they have virtually granted, that it was absolutely *impossible* it should have come into existence, *without a cause*. The bare possibility of the world's *beginning* to exist, amounts to a demonstration, that

it *did begin* to exist. And the bare possibility of its *beginning* to exist, *by a cause*, amounts to a demonstration, that *there was some cause* of its *beginning* to exist.

IV. The Cause which produced this world, must be *equal* to the effect produced. No cause can produce an effect superior to itself. This is no less impossible, than that an effect should exist, without a cause. For just so far as an effect surpasses the cause, it ceases to be an effect, and exists of itself. To suppose, therefore, that the world owes its existence to any cause inferior to itself, involves the same absurdity as to suppose, that it *began* to exist, without a cause. It requires a greater cause to produce a great, than a small effect. This we know by our own experience. We can produce small effects. We are able to move or new-modify some things around us; but we cannot give existence to the smallest atom. To produce something out of nothing requires a far greater cause, than it does merely to move, or new-modify things which already exist. Hence the character and perfections of the first and supreme Cause; may be fairly argued from the things which he hath made.

Here, then, I would observe,

1. The Creator of all things must be possessed of almighty power. This is the first attribute of the first Cause, which his great and marvellous works impress upon the mind. In surveying the works of creation, their greatness constrains us to conclude, that no less than Almighty power could bring them out of nothing into being. It is true, our *imagination* is here apt to get the start of our *reason*, and we are ready to apprehend, that the power of *preserving*, is greater than the power of *creating* the world. *Preserving* power



seems to admit of different *degrees of effort*, in proportion to the different *degrees of magnitude* in the objects *preserved*. It seems to require a *greater effort* in the Supreme Being to support a *mountain*, than a *mole-hill*; or to support the ponderous *earth*, than the light and flying *clouds*. But this is altogether owing to a delusive imagination. In the eye of reason, whatever the Supreme Power can do, he can do with equal ease. It requires no more *effort* in the great first Cause, to support and preserve the world, than it did to call it into existence at first. *He spake, and it was done: he commanded, and it stood fast*. This facility of his operation displays the greatness of his power, in the production of the world. He, who produced an Angel as easily as a man; a Man as easily as a worm; and a World as easily as an atom, must be a Being of unbounded power. His power of creating surpasses the powers of all dependent beings. For, were all their powers united, they could not create a fly, nor a worm, nor produce the least particle of matter. We cannot conceive of any power greater, than that which can give existence, or produce something out of nothing. The Being, therefore, who created this world, must be able to do every thing, which lies within the limits of possibility. By creating one world, he has displayed a power sufficient to create as many worlds, as space itself can contain. And, therefore, if we may judge of the cause by the effect, we may safely conclude, that the first and Supreme Cause of all things is necessarily Omnipotent.

2. The Author and Framer of the world must be supremely wise and intelligent. Mankind have always admired the beauty of the world. The Greeks, that learned and refined nation, called it beauty in the abstract. Uniformity amidst variety, appears through

every part of creation. The motions and revolutions of the heavenly bodies are uniform, though extremely various. There is uniformity amidst variety in every species of grain, of grass, of flowers, of trees and of animals. There is a great uniformity among the many millions of mankind, yet an almost infinite variety. The human body is a most curious piece of machinery. Its various parts are not only well proportioned, but nicely constructed and situated, to answer their various purposes. The feet are admirably fitted for walking, the hands for laboring, the eyes for seeing, the ears for hearing, and the mouth for both feeding and speaking. Indeed, not only the human frame, but the whole creation, appears to be made for use. All the luminaries of heaven serve many and important purposes. They not only afford light to the earth, but divide time into days, months, and years, and a happy variety of seasons. Air and earth, fire and water, are all necessary to support and preserve the lives of men, of animals, and vegetables. The seas which divide, at the same time, unite the numerous nations of the earth. The lower species of animals appear to be made for the service of the higher; the higher and lower species appear to be made for the service of man; and man, a rational and noble creature, appears to be made for the service of his Maker. Such variety, uniformity, regularity, and intelligence in the effect, clearly demonstrate intelligence and wisdom in the Cause. The world bears stronger marks of the design of the Creator, than a clock, or watch, or any other curious machine, bears of the ingenuity of the artificer. Indeed, it is easier to conceive, that houses should be framed; that cities should be built; and all the arts and sciences carried to the highest pitch of improvement by mere chance; than that this beautiful,

regular, and useful world should have been framed by any other cause, than a wise intelligent Being, who resolved and adjusted, in his own mind, every part of it before he called it into existence. When we survey the order, usefulness, and intelligence of the things that are made, we as clearly see and understand the manifold *wisdom*, as the eternal *power* of the God-head.

3. The Builder and Upholder of the world must be every where present.

It is the nature of all created beings and objects, to be constantly and absolutely dependent upon their Creator. But if he constantly upholds all his creatures and all his works, then he must be constantly present in every part of his wide creation. We cannot conceive, that any cause can operate where it does not exist; and of course, we cannot conceive, that the Creator and Preserver of the world should exert his power beyond the limits of his presence. But it is certain, that his preserving and governing power extends to every creature and every object, whether great or small, through every part of the created universe; and therefore it is equally certain, that his presence constantly fills and surrounds the whole creation. And this gives us the highest possible idea of the immensity of the divine presence.

4. The Maker and Governor of the world must be a Being of boundless knowledge.

He must necessarily know himself, and be intuitively acquainted with all his natural and moral perfections. And by knowing these, he must necessarily know all *possibles*; that is, all things which lie within the limits of omnipotence to produce. This is that knowledge, which constitutes one of the essential attributes of the great first Cause. And besides this, he must necessa-

rily have the knowledge of his own purposes and designs, which is properly termed fore-knowledge. For, by knowing his own decrees, he necessarily knows all *actuals*; that is, all things that ever will exist. Hence it appears, that his understanding is infinite, and his knowledge boundless. His great and capacious mind comprehends, at one view, all things past, present, and to come. And more than this, cannot be known.


5. The first, supreme, and intelligent Cause of all things must be Eternal. To suppose the first Cause had a cause of his existence, is to suppose there was a cause before the first Cause. Or to suppose he was the cause of his own existence, is to suppose that he existed and operated, before he did exist. Or to suppose that he came into existence without any cause, is to suppose what has been proved to be impossible. Hence we are constrained to suppose, that there is something in his nature, which renders his existence absolutely necessary and eternal. And though we cannot explain the necessity and eternity of the divine existence; yet this is no real objection against it, because it is reasonable to suppose, the great Creator should exist in a manner, which surpasses the comprehension of all his creatures.

6. The Framer of our bodies and the Father of our spirits must be a Being of moral rectitude.

He hath engraven the evidence of this upon the minds of all intelligent creatures. For, when he made them, "he bent them to the right;" or gave them a capacity of discerning the moral beauty or deformity of every moral agent. But can we suppose, the Creator would furnish his creatures with a faculty, by which they could discover his own moral character, unless he knew himself to be possessed of perfect rectitude and spotless purity? For, if he were not of such

a character, his creatures whom he endued with moral powers would be capable of discovering it; and whenever they should discover it, they would be under moral obligation to hate and detest the Author of their existence. Hence the moral faculty in man carries in it a clear demonstration of the moral rectitude of his Maker. Besides, the whole world bears innumerable marks of the divine goodness. It is every way adapted to satisfy the reasonable desires of all reasonable creatures. And the more the works of God have been explored, by the most inquisitive and discerning minds, the more of his goodness, as well as of his wisdom, has been discovered. All the works of creation and providence have such a natural and direct tendency to promote the holiness and happiness of mankind, that, notwithstanding the prevalence of natural and moral evil, there is abundant reason to conclude that he, who built all things, is Good. And it is well known, that goodness is the sum and comprehension of all moral excellence. Thus it appears, by the most natural and conclusive mode of reasoning, that there must be a first and supreme Cause of all things, who is possessed of every natural and moral perfection. It now remains to make a few deductions from the subject.

1. If it be true, that the visible world displays the being and perfections of the Deity; then all who reason themselves into atheism, are guilty of extreme folly. Those who assume the name of Atheists, generally profess to be masters of superior knowledge and penetration, and affect to despise the rest of mankind, as weak, ignorant, superstitious creatures. But if the world in which we live, and all the objects which come to our view, bear clear and obvious marks of the supreme power, wisdom, and goodness of their Author; then the imputation of folly and weakness must re-



bound upon those, who, in defiance of reason and common sense, deny the being and perfections of the first and supreme Cause, who hath impressed his own great and amiable character upon all his works. Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools, and expose their folly to all men, who make a proper use of their rational powers. It requires much learned labor in any of mankind, to become Atheists in speculation. They must stifle the plain dictates of reason and the common feelings of humanity, by deep and subtile sophistry, before they can renounce the idea of the necessary connexion between cause and effect, which is the last step in the road to Atheism. But when they have taken this step, they have leaped over all the principles of fair reasoning, and put it out of their own power to prove the existence of any other intelligent being, beside themselves. For, if it be once allowed, that any thing can *begin* to exist, and consequently continue to exist, *without a cause*; then the actions of men are no evidence of their *intellectual* powers. And the Atheist, who makes this concession, has no principle left, upon which he can justly conclude, that there is any being in the universe, except himself, who possesses the least degree of perception or intelligence. He, therefore, who says and believes that there is no God; must, in order to be consistent, say and believe, that there are no men. But is it not extreme folly in any man to say and believe, that all mankind are fools, but himself? Such shame must be the promotion of learned and voluntary fools. It behoves those, therefore, who are leaning toward Atheism, and laboring to reason themselves into the disbelief and denial of the Deity, to turn from their dangerous folly, and employ their noble powers to the better purpose of pursuing the chief end of man, which is to glorify God, and enjoy him for ever.

2. If there be a being of supreme power and intelligence, who is the Creator and Proprietor of the world; then there is great reason to think, that he will dispose of all things to his own glory. The same motive which led him to create, will necessarily lead him to govern all his creatures and all their actions. His own glory must have been his highest motive in creating the world, and therefore must be his supreme end in governing every creature, and directing every event. When a man has built a neat and convenient house, we naturally expect, that he will convert it to his own use, or dispose of it according to his own pleasure. So we may reasonably expect, that He, who built all things, will dispose of all things after the counsel of his own will. If there be a God, we may rely upon it, that he will dispose of us and of all our interests; for time and eternity, to his own glory.

3. If there be a Being, who hath made us, and who will absolutely dispose of us; then it is very desirable to receive a Revelation of his will. We are very deeply interested in the purposes of his pleasure concerning us, and therefore have great reason to desire the knowledge of our present duty, and of our future and final destination. If we are to pass through different states of existence, and if one state is to be preparatory to another; then it is very desirable to be made acquainted with the various states through which we have to pass, and the various preparations which are necessary to fit us for a happy transition from one state to another, until we reach the last, in which we are to take up our everlasting residence. To live in God's world, and under his supreme disposal, without any intimations of his mind and will, must be extremely painful to creatures, who are capable of looking forward, and anticipating their future and final condition. This has

been found to be true, by the unhappy experience of those, who have been deprived of the Oracles of God. Socrates, one of the wisest and best of the Heathens, felt and lamented the want of divine Revelation; and at the same time expressed his hope, that the kind Parent of all would, in some future period, indulge his reasonable creatures with such a desirable and important blessing. The bare light of nature discovers only the supremacy of the Creator, and the dependence of creatures. And this light leaves them in the most deplorable darkness. What person of common prudence, would be willing to launch into the mighty ocean, without knowing whither the master of the ship designed to steer his course? But it would be of far less importance to the passenger in the ship, to know the designs of the master; than it is to mankind to know the designs of their Creator. For the master of the ship could only transport the passenger to some remote part of this world, and there leave him for a time; but the great Creator can convey his rational creatures to a distant world, and there fix them for eternity. Every human creature, therefore, who feels the importance of his own existence, must desire some better information concerning his future and eternal state, than he can possibly derive from the bare light of nature. This shows the stupidity and absurdity of those, who deny the inspiration and authority of the sacred Scriptures, merely because they cannot see any need of a divine Revelation.

4. If there be a God, who is possessed of every natural and moral perfection, then it is fruitless for those, who believe and acknowledge his existence, to deny the divinity of the Scriptures, in order to get rid of their disagreeable doctrines. No man would wish to disbelieve and discard the holy Scriptures, if they con-



tained nothing disagreeable to his heart. But many, who read the sacred Oracles, find they contain very disagreeable sentiments, which they wish to be at liberty to reject. And they are ready to imagine, that if they can only bring themselves to disbelieve the divine authority of the scriptures, they shall then be at full liberty to disbelieve all the disagreeable doctrines, which they teach and inculcate. But this is a very great mistake. For, if they will only look into the Book of Nature, they will there find many of the same disagreeable truths, which are written in the Book of revelation. If the creation of the world be not a cunningly devised fable, but the production of an infinitely powerful, wise, and benevolent Being; then all who acknowledge his existence and attributes, are still obliged to believe a number of sentiments, which are no less disagreeable to the corrupt heart, than any that can be found in the Scriptures of truth. In particular,

They are obliged to believe the doctrine of divine decrees. If the author of nature be a Being of perfect wisdom, he must have formed all his purposes from eternity. He could not have *begun* to operate, in a single instance, before he had determined the nature, number, duration, and end, of all his works. And by determining all his own conduct, he must have necessarily determined the conduct and character, and final state of all his intelligent and accountable creatures. The doctrine of decrees, in its largest extent, necessarily results from the being and perfections of God. Hence all, who acknowledge themselves to be the creatures of God, are constrained to believe, that he hath decreed every thing respecting them, through every period of their existence. Again,

If there be a God, who governs all things in perfect rectitude; then it must be the duty of every intelligent creature to yield *unconditional submission* to his will. The will of the creature ought always to bow to the will of the Creator. Not one of the creatures of God has a right to say unto him, what doest thou? Unreserved submission is a duty, which grows out of absolute dependence. And since all men, without exception, are entirely dependent upon God, they are under indispensable obligation to submit to him in all things, without the least murmur or complaint. If we acknowledge the existence of God, we must, in order to be consistent, cordially resign all our interests, for time and eternity, to his supreme disposal. Once more,

All, who believe the existence and moral rectitude of the Deity, are obliged to believe the doctrine of future rewards and punishments. A Being, who loves righteousness and hates iniquity, cannot look upon the conduct of free, moral agents, with an eye of indifference. He must be either pleased or displeased with all their moral conduct. If they act agreeably to that moral faculty, which he hath implanted in their breasts, they will meet with his approbation; but if they violate the dictates of conscience, and do those things, which they know to be wrong, they will incur his just displeasure. The moral rectitude of the Supreme Being lays mankind under moral obligation to obey him; and at the same time, gives them just ground to expect, that he will finally call them to an account for all their actions, and treat them according to their respective characters, by rewarding the righteous, and punishing the wicked.

These, and many other disagreeable truths necessarily result from the essential perfections of the great Creator; and, therefore, it is of no avail to deny the

truth and divinity of the Scriptures, in order to get clear from the hard sayings and disagreeable doctrines of Christ and his Apostles. No man, under the light of the gōspel, can really believe the existence, and love the character of God, and yet disbelieve and reject the doctrines of divine revelation.

5. If there be a God, then all his reasonable creatures are bound to be religious. The natural and moral attributes of the Deity are the primary ground of all religious duties and affections. And so long as God continues to possess supreme power, wisdom, and goodness, these great and amiable attributes will lay all mankind under indispensable obligations to love, revere, obey and worship their Creator. Our capacity to know God obliges us to glorify him as God. And hence we must cease to be reasonable creatures, before we can cease to be under obligation to adore and worship Him, in whom we live, and move, and have our being. O come, then, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; and give unto him the glory, which his great and amiable character deserves. Amen.

## SERMON II.

### THE PLENARY INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

2 PETER i, 21.

*For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

SOME able writers in favor of divine revelation, have ventured to compound the matter with Infidels, and given up the inspiration of some parts of Scripture, for the sake of maintaining the inspiration of the rest. This looks like carrying candor and condescension too far, and betraying the cause, which they mean to defend. It is not to be expected, that unbelievers will be satisfied with their partial concessions; but will continue their demands, until they allow them to place the whole Bible upon a level with the writings of uninspired men. There seems, however, to be no occasion for the least yielding on the part of believers, if they can only make it appear, that so long as the sacred Penmen were employed in writing the books of the Old and New Testament, they were constantly moved and guided by the Holy Ghost. And this, it must be allowed, is expressly asserted in the words of our text. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." It appears from the preceding verses, that the Apostle is here speaking of Scripture in general; and therefore his real meaning must be, that the Holy Ghost was the supreme Agent, and holy men were but mere in-

struments, in writing the Word of God. Agreeably to this construction of the text, it will be the business of the ensuing discourse to make it appear,

That the book, which we emphatically call the Bible, was written by the inspiration of suggestion.

I shall, first, explain the meaning of this general proposition; and, then, offer several considerations to establish the truth of it.

Let us, in the first place, inquire what is to be understood by the inspiration of suggestion. Some suppose, there are three kinds of inspiration; which they distinguish from each other, by calling the first, the inspiration of Superintendency; the second, the inspiration of Elevation; and the third, the inspiration of Suggestion.

The inspiration of Superintendency is supposed to be such a divine control over the sacred Penmen, as left all their rational powers in their natural state: but yet constantly preserved them from writing any thing false or absurd.

The inspiration of Elevation is supposed to be a certain divine impulse upon the minds of the sacred Writers, which warmed their imaginations, and raised all their natural faculties to an unusual degree of vigor and activity.

And there can be no doubt but the inspiration of Suggestion took place, "when the natural faculties of the sacred Penmen were superseded, and God spake directly to their minds, making such discoveries to them, as they could not have otherwise obtained, and dictating the very words in which such discoveries were to be communicated."

It was this last and highest kind of inspiration, which, we suppose, God was pleased to afford those holy men, whom he employed in writing the books of

the Old and New Testament. He not only directed them to write, but, at the same time, *suggested* what to write; so that according to the literal sense of the text, they wrote exactly as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Now, the truth of this observation will appear, if we consider,

1. It was necessary, that the sacred Penmen should be *conscious* of divine inspiration, all the while they were writing. It was not sufficient for them barely to know, that they *began* to write under the influence of the Spirit; but it was equally necessary for them to know, how long the Spirit *continued to move* upon their minds. For nothing short of a constant realizing sense of his motion and direction, could give them full assurance, that what they wrote was the infallible word of God, which they might honestly present to the world, under the sanction of divine authority. It must be supposed, therefore, that they were actually *conscious* of some kind of inspiration, every moment while they were writing. But it is difficult to conceive, how they could be *conscious* of the inspiration of *Superintendency*, which suggests neither thoughts nor words. And it is no less difficult to conceive, how they could be *conscious* of the inspiration of *Elevation*, which only assists the natural powers of the mind to operate in their *natural way*. Whereas it is easy to conceive, how they could be *conscious* of the inspiration of *Suggestion*. For this must have constantly and powerfully governed all their thoughts and words, just so long as it continued to operate. And whatever they wrote under the immediate and sensible influence of such a divine impulse, they might safely and confidently offer to the world, as a divine revelation. Hence it is natural to conclude, that they enjoyed, and were *conscious* of enjoying the *suggesting* influ-

ences of the Spirit, all the while they were writing the sacred pages.

2. The Supreme Being was as able to afford them the *highest*, as the *lowest* kind of inspiration. He could as easily *suggest* thoughts and words to their minds, as either *superintend*, or *elevate* their intellectual faculties. This must be allowed by those, who distinguish divine inspiration into various kinds. They suppose the Deity always granted the *suggesting* influence of the Spirit to the sacred Penmen, whenever they had occasion for such assistance; and can assign no other reason for its being sometimes suspended, but only that it was sometimes unnecessary. This, however, is much easier to suppose, than to prove. For, if the sacred Writers stood in constant need of *some* kind of inspiration, as they allow, how does it appear, that any thing short of inspiration of suggestion would afford them sufficient aid? And since it is natural to suppose, that they did constantly need to be guided by the Holy Ghost, all the while they were writing, it is natural to conclude, that they were constantly favored with the inspiration of Suggestion. This leads me to observe,

3. That the sacred Penmen were utterly incapable of writing such a book as the Bible, without the constant guidance of the Holy Ghost. The professed design of this Book is to afford weak and depraved creatures an infallible rule of faith and practice. But even holy men of God were incapable of writing a Book, which should answer this important purpose, without being constantly guided and dictated by the Holy Ghost. Mere superintendency could not afford them sufficient assistance. This could only preserve them from writing any thing false, or absurd, without imparting the least light or strength to their intellectual

powers. And, supposing they had written under such a divine protection; yet their writings *must* have been totally destitute of divine instruction, and *might* have been equally destitute of the common beauties and excellencies of human compositions. A book may be written without a single error or falsehood, and yet be a weak, inaccurate, and contemptible performance. Had it been possible, therefore, that God should have preserved the sacred Writers from every mistake or blunder, without *suggesting* either thoughts or words to their minds; yet such a superintendency would have left them totally incapable of writing a divine revelation. Nor would they have been able to perform such a difficult and important work, had they been further favored with the inspiration of Elevation. It is true, this kind of inspiration might have guarded them, in some measure, against their natural weakness and imperfection, and given them some real assistance in their compositions. A divine elevating influence upon their minds, might have enabled them to write with peculiar ease, animation, and sublimity. But supposing their writings had possessed all these beautiful qualities; yet they would have wanted both divine information and divine authority, which alone could have rendered them the real Word of God.

Now, if neither the *superintending*, nor the *elevating* influences of the Spirit, were sufficient to enlighten and direct the sacred Penman in writing the Scriptures of truth; then it undeniably follows, that they stood in constant and absolute need of the inspiration of Suggestion. No lower nor less constant assistance than this, could enable them to write a book, so free from error, and so full of information, as God designed the Bible should be. It is true, he did not intend the Scriptures should reveal his will upon all religious



subjects; nor so clearly reveal it upon some subjects, as to prevent all human doubts, mistakes, or disputes. But yet he meant, that the Bible should be free from all human errors and imperfections, and contain all the truths, which were necessary to be revealed, in order to answer the purposes of his providence and grace. And it is easy to see, that every sentence, and even every word in such a Book as this, was of too much importance to be written by any *unassisted* pen. Hence it is natural to conclude, the Holy Ghost *suggested* every thought and word to the sacred Penmen, all the while they were writing the holy Scriptures. Besides,

4. To suppose, that they sometimes wrote without the inspiration of Suggestion, is the same as to suppose that they sometimes wrote without any inspiration at all. The distinguishing of inspiration into three kinds, is a mere human invention; which has no foundation in scripture or reason. And those, who make this distinction, appear to amuse themselves and others, with words without ideas. The Supreme Being is able both to *superintend* and *elevate* the minds of men, in the common dispensations of providence and grace. Solomon tells us, "The preparations of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord." In the exercise of such a universal control over the views, and thoughts, and words, of men, God does nothing which is either supernatural or miraculous. But *Inspiration*, in every degree of it, always means something which is truly *supernatural* and *miraculous*; and which is essentially different from both *common* and *special* grace. This clearly appears in the case of the primitive Christians. They were the subjects, not of common and special grace only, but of divine inspiration. "For to one was given by the Spirit the

word of wisdom: to another, the word of knowledge by the same spirit; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, divers kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues." All these spiritual gifts partook of the nature of inspiration, and were truly miraculous. They were above nature, and such as the natural powers of the mind could not attain, by any mere common or natural assistance. But the inspiration of Superintendency and the inspiration of Elevation have nothing supernatural or miraculous in them; nor can they be distinguished from common and special grace. This may be easily illustrated. Common and special grace leave all the intellectual faculties of the mind, in their *natural state*; and so does what is called the inspiration of Superintendency. Common and special grace sometimes *enliven* and *invigorate* the natural powers of the mind, *to a great and unusual degree*, and so does what is called the inspiration of Elevation. In short, no person is able to describe, nor even to conceive, of any inspiration, which is *higher* than common assistance, and, yet at the same time, *lower* than the inspiration of *Suggestion*. It is no less contrary to reason to suppose, there are *three*, than to suppose there are *thirty* kinds of Inspiration. And the dictates of reason upon this subject, are confirmed by the dictates of Scripture, which speaks only of *one* kind of inspiration, and represents that *one* kind to be the *moving* of the Holy Ghost, or the inspiration of Suggestion. This, therefore, was the only inspiration, under which the sacred Penmen wrote, so long as they were divinely inspired. And if they were divinely inspired, all the while they were writing, then they all the while enjoyed the *suggesting* influences of the Spirit. But it is generally believed and maintained, that they were in some

measure, really *inspired*, all the time they were writing the Books of the Old and New Testament. And if we allow this to be true, then we must necessarily suppose, that every book, and every sentence in every book, was written under the plenary inspiration of Suggestion. I may now add,

5. That the sacred Penmen profess to have written the Scriptures under the immediate and constant guidance of the Holy Ghost. The Writers of the Old Testament tell us, that they saw visions; that the Word of the Lord came to them; and that they were divinely authorized to sanction their warnings, their reproofs, and their predictions, with a *Thus saith the Lord*. By all these modes of expression, they solemnly profess to have written, not according to their own will, but as they were directed and moved by the divine Spirit. And this testimony of the Prophets to their own inspiration, is fully confirmed by the united testimony of the Apostles. Peter says, "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were *moved* by the Holy Ghost." And Paul says, "*All* scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The Apostle here asserts, that *all* scripture in general is given by inspiration of God; and that *all parts* of scripture in particular, which are profitable either for doctrine, or reproof, or correction, or instruction, are given by the same inspiration. These parts taken together, evidently comprise all the history, all the biography, all the poetry, all the prophecy, and all the precepts, promises, and threatenings, to be found in the law and

the Prophets. This passage, therefore, testifies to the immediate inspiration of the whole, and of every part of the Old Testament writings. And the same Apostle gives as ample testimony to the inspiration of the Writers of the New Testament. He speaks of his own inspiration, with great assurance. "But I *certify* you, brethren, that the gospel, which was preached of me, is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the *revelation* of Jesus Christ." In another passage, he more fully and expressly asserts, that both he and the other Apostles were favored with the inspiration of Suggestion. "But, as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath *revealed* them to us by his Spirit;—which things also we speak; *not in the words* which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the *Holy Ghost* teacheth." The Apostle John also professes to have been divinely taught and directed, in writing his Revelations. "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: *who bare record* of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that *he saw*." Thus the Apostles and Prophets profess to have written under the immediate inspiration of God, who dictated the matter, manner, and style of their writings. And from this and the other considerations which have been offered, we have sufficient reason to believe, that the Bible was written from beginning to end, by the inspiration of Suggestion.

But since this is a very important subject, which claims a fair and full discussion; it may be proper to

take particular notice of the most weighty objections, which may be made against the plenary inspiration of the holy Scriptures.

1. It may be said there appears a great diversity in the manner and style of the sacred Penmen, which cannot be easily reconciled with the supposition of their being equally and constantly guided by the inspiration of Suggestion.

It is true, indeed, we plainly discover some variety in the manner and style of the sacred Writers. Isaiah and Paul, as well as Moses, David, and Solomon, who were men of education and refinement, write in a more pure and elevated style, than the prophet Amos, who lived among the herdmen of Tekoa, and the Apostle John, who lived among the fishermen of Galilee. But this is easy to be accounted for, by only supposing, that God dictated to each sacred Penman a manner and style corresponding to his own peculiar genius, education, and manner of living. Were a parent to dictate a letter for a child, would he not dictate it, in a manner and style somewhat agreeable to the age, genius, and attainments of the child? And is there not as much reason, why God should dictate a different manner and style to the different Authors of the Old and New Testament; as why he should employ so many men of such different degrees of knowledge and refinement, to write the sacred Scriptures? We do not discover, therefore, any greater diversity in the manner and style of the sacred Penmen, than we might reasonably expect to find, in case they wrote exactly as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

But, on the other hand, we find a much greater similarity in their manner and style, than could be reasonably expected, on supposition of their writing agreeably to their own genius and taste, without the sug-

*gesting* influences of the Spirit. That great christian philosopher, Robert Boyle, and many other excellent judges of good composition, have justly observed, that there is not only a simplicity, but a sublimity, in the style of Scripture, which cannot be found in any other writings. This is not all. The sacred Penmen have a *manner*, as well as a *style*, which is peculiar to themselves. They seem to avoid the common modes and forms of uninspired Writers. They write in the most free, easy, and authoritative manner. They enter upon their subject, without any formal introduction; they pursue their subjects, without any formal arguments, or dissertations; and they conclude their subjects, without any formal reflections, or recapitulations. Herein they not only differ from others, but agree with one another. And this general similarity of *manner*, as well as of *style*, is a stronger evidence in favor of their plenary inspiration, than any inaccuracy or inelegance of language is against it.

Besides, the manner and style of the sacred Writers were of too much importance, to be left to their own unassisted discretion and integrity. Will any wise general permit an under officer to deliver his special orders to the army, without dictating the expressions to be used? Or will any public body send an important message to any other public body without dictating the words of the message? Can it be supposed, then, that God would suffer his imperfect, fallible creatures to publish his will, without dictating the manner and style, in which his will should be published?

2. It may be said, that the mistakes and contradictions to be found in the Scriptures, plainly refute the notion of their being written under the inspiration of Suggestion.

To this it may be replied in general, that most of the supposed mistakes and contradictions to be found in the Scriptures, may be only *apparent*; and so might be fully reconciled or removed, if we were better acquainted with the original languages, in which the sacred books were written, and with the customs and manners of the different ages and places, in which the sacred Penmen lived. But the direct and decisive answer to this objection is, that it operates with equal force against every kind of inspiration. This all must allow, who suppose, that there are more kinds of inspiration than one; and who maintain, that all those parts of Scripture, which were not written by the inspiration of Suggestion, were written either by the inspiration of Superintendency, or the inspiration of Elevation. For, so long as God especially *superintended*, or especially *elevated* the minds of the sacred Penmen, he must have effectually preserved them from all *real* contradictions and mistakes. Indeed, this objection refutes itself. For, if nothing short of the inspiration of Suggestion could have preserved the sacred Writers from falling into *real* errors, then it must be supposed that they were constantly dictated by the Holy Ghost. And if they wrote under this plenary inspiration, then the merely *apparent* errors to be found in their writings must be placed to our own ignorance; and all the *real* contradictions and mistakes must be imputed to the ignorance, or inattention, or unfaithfulness of transcribers and of translators.

3. It may be said, since God originally intended, that the Bible should be transcribed by different hands, and translated into different languages, there was no occasion for his *suggesting* every thought and word to the sacred Penmen; because, after all, their writ-

ings must be subject to human defects and imperfections.

It is sufficient to observe here, that every transcription and translation is commonly more or less perfect, in proportion to the greater or less perfection of the original. And since the Scriptures were designed to be often transcribed and translated; this made it *more* necessary, instead of *less*, that they should be written, at first, with peculiar accuracy and precision. Men always write with great exactness, when they expect their writings will be frequently copied, or translated into various languages. The instructions to an Ambassador at a foreign Court, are usually written with extraordinary care and attention; because it is naturally expected that such writings will be often transcribed and translated. And upon this ground, we may reasonably suppose, that the divine Spirit dictated every thought and word to the sacred Penmen, to prevent gross errors and mistakes from finally creeping into their writings by frequent transcriptions and translations.

4. It may be said, that the Apostle Paul seems to acknowledge, in the seventh chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, that he wrote some things in that chapter, according to his own private opinion, without the aid or authority of a plenary inspiration. In one verse he says, "I speak this by permission, and not of commandment." And in another verse he says, "To the rest speak I, not the Lord."

If we understand these expressions *literally*, then we must suppose, that the Apostle and all the other sacred Penmen always wrote under a plenary inspiration, only when they gave intimations to the contrary. If it were proper for one of these Writers, then it was proper for all of them, to give notice when



they wrote without a plenary inspiration. And if it were proper to give such notice in one instance, then it was proper in every instance, when they wrote by permission, and not of commandment. But we find no such notice given, except in the chapter under consideration; and therefore we may justly conclude, that all the other parts of Scripture were written by the immediate inspiration of God.

But if, in the second place, we understand the Apostle as speaking *ironically* in the verses before us, then his expressions will carry no idea of his writing, without divine aid and authority. And there is some ground to understand his words in this sense. He was not made a subject of special grace, nor called to be an Apostle, until some time after Christ's ascension to heaven. This gave his enemies occasion to insinuate, that he was inferior to the other Apostles, in point of divine authority. And he knew, that some of the Corinthians had imbibed this prejudice against him; for he says, "they sought a *proof* of Christ speaking in him." Hence we find in the close of this chapter, after he had been speaking ironically of his own inspiration, he says seriously, "I think also that I have the spirit of God." That is, I think I have the supernatural and suggesting influences of the Spirit of God, as well as the rest of the Apostles, whom you acknowledge to be divinely inspired. This explains his doubtful expressions, and ascertains the divine influence, under which he wrote this chapter, and this and all his other Epistles.

There is, however, a third answer to this objection, which appears to be the most satisfactory: and that is this. The Apostle is here speaking upon the subject of marriage; and he intimates, that he has more to say upon this subject, than either the Prophets, or Christ.

had said upon it. Accordingly he says, "I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. To the rest speak I, not the Lord." By these expressions, he means to distinguish what he said from what other inspired Teachers had said, upon the same subject. And to convince the Corinthians, that he had not been speaking his own private opinion in reference to them in particular; but had been delivering, by divine authority, such precepts as should be universally and perpetually binding upon christians in general, he makes this explicit declaration in the seventeenth verse: "And so *ordain I* in *all* the churches."

On the whole, there appears no solid objection against the plenary inspiration of any part of the sacred Scriptures; but on the other hand, every argument which proves them to be *partly*, equally proves them to be *altogether*, given by the immediate inspiration of God.

## IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the Bible contains the very ideas and sentiments, which were immediately suggested to the sacred Penmen, by the divine Spirit; then great caution and circumspection ought to be used in explaining Scripture. The words of Scripture may not be lightly altered, nor expunged, nor supplied, nor wrested from their plain and obvious meaning according to the connexion in which they stand. Some have used great freedom with the Bible, and treated it with less deference, than they would have dared to treat an ancient Greek or Latin author. They have supplied places, where they imagined words were wanting. They have transposed not only words, but sentences, paragraphs, and even whole chapters. And all this has commonly been done, to support some favorite error,

or to evade some disagreeable doctrine. The advocates for Arminianism, Arianism, Socinianism, and Universalism, have done great violence to Scripture in this way. Their systems of religion are so contrary to the plain and literal sense of the Bible, that they have found themselves under the disagreeable necessity of distorting and disjointing the Scriptures, in order to read them into their preconceived and pre-adapted schemes. But there is not, I believe, any essential or important doctrine of the Bible, which is to be found in such dark or doubtful texts only, as require a great deal of learning and criticism to explain. If any scheme of religious sentiments cannot be discovered and supported by plain and intelligible passages of Scripture, there is great reason to suspect the truth of it. If, for instance, no man can determine, that all men will be saved, without reading the New Testament through repeatedly and critically in the original language, there is great reason to doubt whether the doctrine of universal salvation, is really contained in the Bible. The most important doctrines of the gospel are so necessarily connected, and so repeatedly and plainly expressed, in different parts of Scripture, that all men of common knowledge, and of common honesty, may easily discover them. And every person ought to be very cautious how he adopts any religious sentiments, which seem to contradict the general current of Scripture, and which cannot be maintained, without denying, or explaining away, the plain and obvious meaning of many passages in the Bible.

2. If the divine Spirit suggested every word and thought to the holy Penmen; then it is not strange, that they did not understand their own writings. These the Apostle tells us, in our context, they did not

understand. "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, *that not unto themselves, but unto us*, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." By this it appears, that the prophets did not understand those things, which they wrote under the immediate influence and suggestion of the Spirit of Christ. And it is easy to conceive, that the sacred Writers should be ignorant of many things, in their own writings, if they were not left to write according to their own natural and unassisted abilities. They might, by the aid of the Spirit, write precepts, predictions, promises, and threatenings, of whose import they were ignorant, that should be very intelligible and very useful, in future ages. They wrote not for themselves, but for others; not for present, but future times. And this affords an additional evidence of the plenary inspiration of all the sacred writings.

3. If the Bible was written under the Inspiration of Suggestion, then it is an infallible rule of faith, and the only standard, by which to try our religious sentiments. When we are in doubt about our own religious opinions, or the religious opinions of others, we ought to carry them to the Law and to the Testimony, and abide the divine decision. Those sentiments, which are agreeable to the Bible, are to be received as true; but those, which are neither found in the Bible, nor are agreeable to it, are to be rejected as false. There is no other standard of superior authority, to

which we can appeal. We may not appeal from Scripture to reason, if Scripture be the word of God. But if it be not, then we may, with propriety, appeal from Scripture to reason. Accordingly, we find, that those who deny the plenary Inspiration of the Bible, take the liberty of appealing from Scripture to reason. Dr. Priestley, Mr. Lindsay, and others, when they are pinched with Scripture arguments against their Socinian sentiments, appeal from the opinion of the Apostles, to the superior authority of Reason. They consider the New Testament writers as fallible men, who wrote their own sentiments honestly, but, who, being destitute of the Inspiration of Suggestion, might make mistakes in the most important doctrines of religion. And if it be allowed, that the prophets and the Apostles, did write the prophetic, historical, and doctrinal parts of the Bible, without the suggesting influences of the Spirit, then there is no more harm, nor impropriety, in appealing from their writings to reason, than in appealing from the writings of other men to that superior standard. But, if what we have endeavored to prove be true, that every word and sentiment in the Bible was immediately suggested to the sacred Penmen, by the Holy Ghost, then their writings are, strictly speaking, the word of God; and to appeal from their writings to reason, is the same as to appeal from God to man; which is absurd and criminal in the highest degree.

4. If holy men of old wrote as they were moved by God, then it is reasonable to expect, that the Bible should bear clear and strong marks of its divine Author. Every human composition bears marks of human imperfection. A divine composition, therefore, will as infallibly bear marks of divine perfection. Accordingly, when we look into the Bible, we

find the image and superscription of the Deity on every page. It displays all the perfections of God. We see the power of God in the works of creation, providence and grace, which are ascribed to him. We see the wisdom of God in the great scheme of redemption which the Scriptures reveal. We see the boundless knowledge of God in the prophecies of future events, which could be foreknown and foretold, by no other than an omniscient Being. We see the holiness of God in the precepts and prohibitions and penalties, contained in the Bible. We see the future state of all moral beings clearly described, which none but the Supreme Being could either know or describe. The Bible, in short, contains those things, which we stand in the most need of knowing, and which God only could reveal to us. It has, therefore, every internal mark of its divine original and divine authority, which it is reasonable to expect, that a divine Revelation should bear on the face of it. We might as easily conceive, that a number of men should have created a new material and intellectual world, as that they should have devised, composed and propagated such a Book as the Bible, in which the character and designs of God are so clearly unfolded, and the final issue of things so clearly and justly revealed. As the Bible claims to be, so it proves itself to be, the word of God. For no other being or beings could, or would have written a Book so honorable to God, so dishonorable to men, and so agreeable to the relations which creatures bear to one another, and to their great Creator, and supreme Disposer. Those, therefore, who deny the divinity of the Scriptures, betray their weakness as well as wickedness.

5. If the Bible be the immediate Revelation of God's mind and will to men, then it is a most precious Book. Nothing can be more desirable and more important,

than to know the mind and will of our Creator, our Sovereign and our Supreme Judge. It is comparatively of little moment, whether we know the history of the world, the laws of nature, or the use of arts and sciences. All the books written upon these subjects are lighter than a feather, when put into the balance with the Bible. This book as far surpasses, in value, all other books, as our eternal interests surpass our temporal. No wonder, therefore, that a man after God's own heart, should so highly esteem his word. David says unto God, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver." He gives the reasons of his high estimation of the word of God in the 19th Psalm. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb." All who regard the glory of God, and the eternal interests of their own souls, must highly prize the Holy Scriptures, which have brought life and immortality to light, and which are able to make them wise unto salvation.

6. If the Bible contains the mind and will of God, then all, who enjoy it, may know, in this world, what will be their state in the next. It clearly describes both heaven and hell, and the terms upon which we may obtain the one, and escape the other. All penitent, submissive, and obedient believers, may find great and

precious promises made to persons of their character, in the Bible. And all impenitent, rebellious, and unbelieving sinners, may find in the same Book, great and dreadful threatenings denounced against persons of their character. The condition of every person in a future state, will be correspondent with his character in this. Every person, therefore, by comparing his character with the word of God, may determine, whether he is a child of wrath, or an heir of heaven. For, at the last day, the books will be opened, and among other books, the sacred volume of the Bible will be opened, and those who enjoyed it, will be judged and treated according to God's promises and threatenings contained in it. This Christ intimated, when he said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him, *the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*" The words which he spake to his Ministers, in his last commission, were these: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned." All, who read the Bible impartially, may determine, whether they are entitled to the enjoyments of heaven, or stand exposed to the miseries of the damned. If any live and die ignorant of their future condition, it must be owing to their negligence, or their unwillingness to be acquainted with the true state of their minds. But it must be very criminal and dangerous, for those who have the sure word of prophecy in their hands, to shut their eyes against the light, and live and die in darkness.

7. If the Bible be indeed the word of God, then it is not strange, that it has had such a great influence over the minds of men. No other book in the world has produced such great effects upon mankind as the Bible. Yea, all the books that have ever been pub-



lished, have never had a thousandth part so much power to convince, persuade, and govern the minds of men, as the Scriptures of truth. The heathens wrote many books, in which they described the vanity of the world, the deformity of vice, the beauty of virtue, the shortness of life, the certainty of death, and even the fate of departed souls. But their writings never produced any great effect upon the hearts and lives of men. They were considered and treated as destitute of divine authority. But the word of God, contained in the Bible, has been quick and powerful, and sharper than a two edged sword. It has proved the means of awakening, convincing, and converting thousands and thousands of mankind from the error of their ways. It has subdued and converted Atheists, Deists, Heathen philosophers, Pagan idolaters, Jewish infidels, and the most vicious and abandoned sinners, in all parts of the world where it has been sent. It has made its learned and bitter enemies burn their books, which were in contradiction to it. These great and glorious and happy effects, which have been produced by the instrumentality of the Bible, are clear and indubitable attestations to its divine original and sacred authority. It is hard to determine whether it discovered greater folly, or greater malignity, in a late infidel to say, that any man might write as good a book as the Bible. Socrates and Plato, Seneca, and Cicero could not write so good a book. Their writings never converted their readers from idolatry, luxury, or immorality. But the Bible has converted millions and millions from the most absurd principles, and most vicious practices. And we appeal even to infidels themselves, whether they do not approach the Bible with awe, read it with fear, and close it, with a painful conviction of its divine authority.

## SERMON III.

### THE ESSENTIAL AND IMMUTABLE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG.

ISAIAH V, 20.

*Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*

IT appears from the preceding context, that God had used a great variety of means, to cultivate the minds of his people, and prepare them to bring forth the fruits of righteousness. But all the means which he had used with them, were unhappily lost upon them. Instead of bringing forth grapes, they brought forth wild grapes. Instead of growing better under divine cultivations, they waxed worse and worse, until they presumed to justify themselves, by denying the distinction between virtue and vice. For this presumption, God denounces a heavy wo against them in our text. "*Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*" The propriety of this threatening is founded in the essential and immutable difference between right and wrong, good and evil. Were there no such distinction, in the nature of things, between virtue and vice, there could be no real harm in calling good evil, and evil good; nor even in denying the existence of both. But if there be a foundation in the nature of things, for a moral distinction in the actions of moral agents; then God may justly threaten and punish those, who

deny the criminality of their own sinful conduct, by denying the immutable distinction between virtue and vice. Agreeably, therefore, to the spirit of the text, I shall endeavor to make it appear, that there is in the nature of things an essential-difference between virtue and vice.

I shall first explain the meaning, and then confirm the truth, of this observation.

Every thing has a nature which is peculiar to itself, and which is essential to its very existence. Light has a nature, by which it is distinguished from darkness. Sweet has a nature, by which it is distinguished from bitter. Animals have a nature, by which they are distinguished from men. Men have a nature, by which they are distinguished from angels. Angels have a nature, by which they are distinguished from God. And God has a nature, by which he is distinguished from *all* other beings. Now, such different natures lay a foundation for different obligations; and different obligations lay a foundation for virtue and vice in all their different degrees. As virtue and vice, therefore, take their origin from the nature of things; so the difference between moral good and moral evil is as immutable as the nature of things, from which it results. It is as impossible in the nature of things, that the essential distinction between virtue and vice should cease, as that the essential distinction between light and darkness, bitter and sweet, should cease. These distinctions do not depend upon the bare will of the Deity; for so long as he continues the nature of things, no law or command of his can change light into darkness, bitter into sweet, nor virtue into vice. And this is what we mean by the assertion, that virtue and vice are essentially different, in the nature of things. Having fixed the meaning, I proceed

to show the truth, of this assertion. And the truth of it will appear, if we consider,

1. That the essential difference between virtue and vice may be known by those, who are wholly ignorant of God. The barbarians, who saw the viper on Paul's hand, knew the nature and ill desert of murder. The Pagans, who were in the ship with Jonah, knew the difference between natural and moral evil, and considered the former as a proper and just punishment of the latter. The natives of this country know the nature and obligation of promises and mutual contracts, as well as our wisest politicians, who form national treaties and compacts with them. And even little children know the nature of virtue and vice, and are able to perceive the essential difference between truth and falsehood, justice and injustice, kindness and unkindness, obedience and disobedience, as well as their parents, or any other persons, who are acquainted with God and the revelation of his will. But how would children and heathens discover the essential difference between moral good and evil, if this difference were not founded in the nature of things! They are totally ignorant of God, and of consequence, totally ignorant of his revealed will. It is impossible, therefore, that they should know, that any thing is either right or wrong, virtuous or vicious, because God has either required, or forbidden it. But if the essential difference between right and wrong results from the nature of things, then those, who are entirely unacquainted with God and his laws, may be able to discover it. Heathens, on this supposition, may know, that murder is a crime, though they never knew God nor heard of the sixth commandment, which says, "*Thou shalt not kill.*" And children, who know no difference between the Bible and other books in respect to divine

authority, may know the criminality of lying and stealing, and feel their moral obligation to refrain from these and other moral evils. Accordingly we find, that both those, who never heard of the Bible, and those, who never read it, are as capable of discerning the difference between moral good and evil, as even those, who make it their business to study and explain the sacred Oracles. And this is a clear evidence, that the essential difference between virtue and vice results, not from the will of God, but from the nature of things.

2. Men are capable of judging what is right or wrong, in respect to the divine character and conduct. This God implicitly allows, by appealing to their own judgment, whether he has not treated them according to perfect rectitude. In the context, he solemnly calls upon his people to judge of the propriety and benignity of his conduct towards them. "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, *judge*, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" He makes a similar appeal to the same people, by the prophet Jeremiah. "Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?" He says by the prophet Ezekiel, "Hear now, O house of Israel; is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?" And he repeats the question, to give it a greater emphasis. "O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?" By the prophet Micah, he appeals not only to Israel, but to all the world, whether he had not treated them with the greatest

propriety and tenderness. "Hear now what the Lord saith: Arise, contend before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and whercin have I wearied thee? testify against me. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted; and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may *know* the *righteousness* of the Lord."

In these solemn appeals to the consciences of men, God does not require them to *believe*, that his character is good, because it is *his* character; nor that his laws are good, because they are *his* laws; nor that his conduct is good, because it is *his* conduct. But he allows them to *judge* of his character, his laws, and his conduct, according to the immutable difference between right and wrong, in the nature of things; which is the infallible rule, by which to judge of the moral conduct of all moral beings. In every instance, therefore, in which God refers his conduct to the judgment of men, he gives the strongest attestation to the immutable difference between right and wrong in the nature of things.

3. God cannot destroy this difference without destroying the nature of things. If he should make a law, on purpose, to destroy the distinction between virtue and vice, it would have no tendency to destroy it. Or if he should make a law, which should forbid us to love him with all our hearts, and our neighbors as

ourselves, it would not destroy the obligation of his first and great command. As no positive precepts can destroy the nature of things; so no positive precepts can destroy our obligations to do what is right, and to avoid what is wrong. While God remains what he is, it will be our duty to obey him, and not his duty to obey us. While we remain what we are, it will be our duty to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us. And while all moral beings remain what they are, it will be criminal in them, to exercise cruelty, injustice, or malevolence towards one another. Hence it is evident, that even Omnipotence cannot destroy the essential distinction between virtue and vice, without destroying the nature of things. And this clearly proves, that virtue and vice are immutably different in the nature of things, independently of the will or pleasure of the Supreme Being. I may add,

4. That the Deity cannot alter the nature of things, so as to destroy the essential distinction between virtue and vice. We can conceive, that God should make great alterations in *us*, and in the *objects* about us; but we cannot conceive that he should make any alterations in *us*, and in the *objects* about us, which should transform virtue into vice, or vice into virtue, or which should destroy their essential difference. No possible alteration in the nature of things, can make it our duty to lie, or steal, or murder, or exercise the least malevolence towards our fellow creatures. This must always be sinful in our world, and in any other world of moral agents. Suppose God should create a new world, and fill it with a new race of moral beings. We cannot conceive, that he should so frame the new world, and so constitute the minds of the new race of moral agents, as that they should feel themselves under

moral obligation to lie, and steal, and murder, and to avoid every exercise and expression of real benevolence. But if God cannot destroy the essential difference between virtue and vice, either by an act of his power, or, by an act of his authority, then it is absolutely certain, that this difference depends not on his will, but on the nature of things, and must remain as long as moral beings exist.

I might now proceed to improve the subject, were it not proper to take notice of one or two objections, which may be made against what has been said.

Object. 1. To suppose the difference between virtue and vice results from the nature of things, is derogatory and injurious to the character of God. For, on this supposition, there is a standard of right and wrong superior to the will of the Deity, to which he is absolutely bound to submit.

To say, that the difference between right and wrong does not depend upon the *will* of God, but upon the nature of things, is no more injurious to his character, than to say, that it does not depend upon his *will* whether two and two shall be equal to four; whether a circle and square shall be different figures; whether the whole shall be greater than a part; or whether a thing shall exist and not exist at the same time. These things do not depend upon the *will* of God, because they *cannot* depend upon his *will*. So the difference between virtue and vice does not depend upon the *will* of God, because his will *cannot* make nor destroy this immutable difference. And it is more to the honor of God, to suppose, that he cannot, than that he can, perform impossibilities. But if the eternal rule of right must necessarily result from the nature of things; then it is no reproach to the Deity to suppose, that he is morally obliged to conform to it. To set God above



the law of rectitude, is not to exalt, but to debase his character. It is the glory of any moral agent to conform to moral obligation. The supreme excellency of the Deity consists, not in always doing what he pleases, but in always pleasing to do what is fit and proper in the nature of things.

Object. 2. There is no other difference between virtue and vice, than what arises from custom, education, or caprice. Different nations judge differently upon moral subjects. What one nation esteems a vice, another nation esteems a virtue. We esteem stealing a moral evil; but the Spartans taught their children to steal, and approved and rewarded them for it.

We esteem murder a great and heinous crime; but the Chinese put their aged and useless parents to death, and destroy their weak, sickly, or deformed children, without the least remorse. Such contrariety in the opinions and practices of different nations, refutes the notion of an immutable standard of right and wrong in the nature of things.

This objection is more specious than solid. For, in the first place, it is certain, that all nations do feel and acknowledge the essential distinction between virtue and vice. They all have words to express this distinction between right and wrong. And since words are framed for use, we may presume, that no nation would frame words to express ideas or feelings, which never entered their minds. Besides, all nations have some penal laws, which are made to punish those who are guilty of criminal actions. It is, therefore, impossible to account for some words, and some laws, which are to be found among all nations, without supposing, that they feel and regard the essential distinction between virtuous and vicious conduct.

This leads me to observe, in the second place, that no nation ever did deny the distinction between virtue and vice. Though the Spartans allowed their children to take things from others without their knowledge and consent; yet they did not mean to allow them to steal, in order to increase their wealth, and gratify a sordid avaricious spirit. They meant to distinguish between *taking* and *stealing*. The former they considered as a mere art, which was suited to teach their children skill and dexterity in their lawful pursuits; but the latter they detested and punished as an infamous crime. So when the Chinese expose their useless children, or their useless parents, they mean to do it as an act of kindness both to their friends and to the public. For in all other cases they abhor murder, or the killing of men from malice prepense, as much as any other nation in the world. There is nothing, therefore, in the practice of the Spartans, nor in the practice of the Chinese, which leads us to suppose, that any nation ever denied the essential distinction between virtue and vice. But though the heathens have never denied this distinction, yet their practice has often shown, that they have mistaken vice for virtue. The Spartans did in indulging their children in the practice of taking things from others without their knowledge and consent. And the Chinese are guilty of the same mistake, in their conduct towards their superannuated parents, and unpromising children. But these, and all other mistakes of the same nature, are to be ascribed to the corruption of the human heart, which blinds and stupifies the conscience, and prevents it from doing its proper office; which is to discover the nature of moral actions, and distinguish right from wrong, good from evil, in practice. Were it not for the blindness of the heart, all men would perceive the eternal

rule of right, and, under the same circumstances, would form precisely the same judgment with respect to their duty. And corrupt as the world now is, mankind generally agree as well in their *moral* sentiments, as in their *political, philosophical or metaphysical* opinions. So that the general sentiments and practices of mankind concur with the reasons which we have offered, to prove the essential distinction between virtue and vice, in the nature of things.

It now remains to make a number of deductions from the important truth, which we have explained and established.

1. If there be an immutable difference between virtue and vice, right and wrong; then there is a propriety in every man's judging for himself in matters of morality and religion. No man ought to rely upon the bare opinion of others, when he is capable of judging for himself, according to an infallible standard. Right and wrong, truth and falsehood, do not depend upon the opinions of men, but the nature of things. Every person ought, therefore, to examine every moral and religious subject for himself, and form his own judgment, without any regard to the authority or opinion of others. As God has given men their eyes to distinguish colors, and their ears to distinguish sounds; so he has given them their reason and conscience, to distinguish truth and falsehood, right and wrong. And, so long as they enjoy these natural and moral powers, they are under moral obligation, to use them for the purposes, for which they were given. The man who has eyes is obliged to see. The man who has ears is obliged to hear. And the man who has reason and conscience is obliged to examine and judge for himself, in matters of morality and religion. It is no less the duty than the right of every man, to deter-

mine for himself, what is true and false in theory, and what is right and wrong in practice. As others have no right to impose their opinions upon him; so he has no right to receive their opinions upon trust. It is his indispensable duty to embrace, or reject all moral and religious sentiments, according to his own private judgment. It may be proper and necessary, in a thousand cases, to collect evidence from others; but after we have received all the information, which they are able to give us, on any subject, it then lies upon us, to form our own opinions, according to evidence, without any regard to the authority, or opinion of fallible creatures. There is a true and false in principle, and a right and wrong in practice, which we are obliged to discover, and according to which we are obliged to believe and act.

2. If there be a standard of right and wrong, in the nature of things; then it is not impossible to arrive at *absolute certainty*, in our moral and religious sentiments. It is the opinion of many, that we can never attain to certainty in any thing, but what we are capable of demonstrating by figures, or immediately perceiving by our external senses. But there is no foundation for this supposition, if right and wrong, truth and falsehood, result from the nature of things. Many suppose, that *moral* and *mathematical* subjects are totally different in respect to certainty. They imagine, that we may attain to certainty in mathematics, but not in morals. But if moral truths as much result from the nature of things as mathematical, then no reason can be assigned, why we may not arrive at certainty in morals as well as in mathematics. For we are as capable of discerning what is right and wrong, as what is true and false, in the nature of things. The author of nature has given us the faculty of reason, to discover mathematical truths, and the fac-

ulty of conscience, to discover moral truths. Our conscience as plainly and as certainly tells us, that murder is a crime, as our reason does, that two and two are equal to four. And it is as much out of our power to disbelieve the dictates of our conscience, as the dictates of our reason. Hence we as *certainly know* moral and religious, as mathematical and philosophical truths. Certainty in mathematics consists in the intuitive perception of the agreement or disagreement between two numbers. And certainty in morals consists in the intuitive perception of the agreement or disagreement between the volitions and obligations of moral agents. It is as easy, therefore, to attain certainty in morals as in mathematics. There are plain and difficult cases in both sciences. That murder is a crime is a plain case in morals; and that three and three are six, is a plain case in mathematics. But there are difficult questions in morals, and no less difficult questions in mathematics. The difficult and doubtful cases, however, are no evidence, that certainty cannot be attained, in more plain and practical cases, and this is all that we mean to assert. We may attain to a certain knowledge of all those truths in morality and religion, which are necessary to direct us in our moral and religious conduct. And so much certainty we ought to seek after, and not rest satisfied without obtaining. God has given us moral as well as natural powers; and we ought to employ our moral powers in seeking after moral truth, as much as we employ our natural powers in searching after either mathematical, philosophical, metaphysical, or historical truth. We should always endeavor to attain to certainty, in all our researches, as far as we are able to do it; and never rest in conjecture, or uncertainty, only when certainty is beyond our opportunities and capacities.

3. If right and wrong are founded in the nature of things, then it is impossible for any man to become a thorough skeptic in morality and religion. Many, who profess to believe the existence and certainty of sensible objects, yet pretend to disbelieve the reality of virtue and vice, or the difference between moral good and moral evil. Those who are addressed in our text, appear to have been such professed skeptics in matters of a moral and religious nature. But it is as truly impossible for men in their right minds, to doubt of all moral and religious truths, as to doubt of their own existence, or the existence of the objects of sense, with which they are constantly surrounded. For they are as much obliged to believe their *mental*, as their *bodily* eyes. When their bodily eyes are open, at noon day, and a picture is presented before them, they are obliged to see it, and believe its existence. So when their eyes are open, at noon day, and an act of barbarous murder is committed before them, they are obliged to see and believe, not only the reality, but the criminality of the action. And it is no more within their power to doubt of the criminality of the murderer, than of the death of the murdered. Moral objects as irresistibly obtrude upon the conscience, as visible objects do upon the eye. And a man can no more avoid seeing and believing moral truths, than he can avoid seeing natural objects, when both are placed before his mind, with equal plainness. Every moral agent is constrained to believe, or doubt, according to the evidence, which he perceives. Doubting as much depends upon evidence as believing. A man may wish to doubt, when it is out of his power to doubt; just as he may wish to believe, when it is out of his power to believe. Believing and doubting are always governed by what the mind perceives to be

the evidence *for* or *against* any truth or fact. A philosopher may tell us, that the planets are inhabited; and exhibit such evidence as may create belief in some, and doubt in others. But if he should pretend to tell us the *names* and *numbers* of the planetary inhabitants, could he gain the belief of a single person? If men could believe and disbelieve at their pleasure, then they might as easily believe a history written in this world, concerning the inhabitants of the planets, as a history written in America, concerning the American revolution; or they might as easily disbelieve every thing, as believe any thing. But if doubting as well as believing depends upon evidence, then no man can doubt, any more than he can believe, without evidence. If he perceives no evidence against his own existence, he cannot doubt of his own existence. If he perceives no evidence against the existence of his fellow-men, he cannot doubt of their existence. If he perceives no evidence against the existence of virtue and vice, he cannot doubt of their existence. But who can perceive any evidence against his own existence? Who can perceive any evidence against the existence of his fellow-men? Who can perceive any evidence against the existence of virtue and vice? And therefore who can be a thorough skeptic in matters of morality and religion? No man ever was, nor ever can be, a thorough skeptic, in respect to religion and morality, without being a thorough skeptic, in respect to all the objects of sense. Religious skepticism is religious hypocrisy; and the man who professes to be a skeptic in religion, professes to be a hypocrite.

4. If right and wrong, truth and falsehood, be founded in the nature of things, then it is not a matter of indifference what moral and religious sentiments mankind imbibe and maintain. They are obliged to

judge and believe according to evidence, and if they do otherwise, they are chargeable with guilt before God, and in the sight of their own consciences. God has given them evidence of truth and falsehood, in the nature of things, and given them powers and faculties to distinguish the one from the other; and if they choose darkness rather than light, and error rather than truth, they must answer for their folly and guilt. God has diffused moral light over the face of the creation, and left all his reasonable creatures without excuse, if they either doubt or disbelieve his existence. The heathens are criminal for disbelieving the being of their great and glorious Creator. They are capable of seeing the mighty evidences of his eternal power and godhead, and, therefore, they are highly criminal for shutting their eyes against the clear light of the divine existence. The Mahometans are capable of seeing the error, and superstition, and idolatry, which are contained in the Koran, and therefore, are inexcusable for disbelieving the great and glorious truths which are clearly revealed in the works of nature, and in the pure word of God, which their false teacher corrupted and perverted. The Papists are highly criminal for all their superstition and idolatry, which are forbidden in the Holy Scriptures. And the Deists, who deny the truth and divinity of the Bible, are guilty of still greater blindness of mind, and obstinacy of heart, in disbelieving the testimony, which God hath given of his Son. Nor are heretics, who corrupt, pervert, and deny particular doctrines of divine revelation, excusable in the sight of God, who has commanded them to understand, believe, and love the truth. However lightly some may think, or speak of errors in morality and religion, it is a matter of serious importance, for every man to form his opinions according to the nature of



things, and the revealed will of God. Voluntary ignorance and error, will meet with the divine displeasure, at the great and last day.

5. If right and wrong, truth and falsehood, be found in the nature of things, then there appears to be a great propriety in God's appointing a day of judgment. Such a day appears proper and necessary on the account of the moral creation. God has no occasion for it on his own account. He always knows and does what is perfectly right in the nature of things. But it cannot appear to his reasonable creatures, that he treats them all right, without his laying before them the feelings and actions, upon which he regulates his conduct. A clear and full exhibition of facts, at the great day, will unfold right and wrong, with respect to every being in the universe. It will unfold the rectitude of God's conduct in every instance. When God tells the universe how he has treated every creature, and how every creature has treated him; every creature will be capable of seeing the wisdom, the goodness, or justice of God, in all his conduct towards men, angels, and devils. And when God lays open the hearts and lives of all his creatures, they will then be capable of judging who ought to go to heaven, and who ought to go to hell; or who ought to be happy, and who ought to be miserable, to all eternity. Such a clear and full exhibition of *facts*, will clear the innocent, and condemn the guilty, in the minds of all intelligent beings. And from the day of judgment, to all eternity, every intelligent being will possess clear light respecting himself, his God, and his fellow-creatures. This will give an emphasis to the joys of heaven, and the miseries of hell, and serve as bars and bolts to sever the righteous and wicked, to interminable ages. This will shut fear out of heaven, and hope out of hell, forever and ever.

6. We learn from what has been said, that all who go to heaven, will go there by the unanimous voice of the whole universe. They will be judged to be fit for heaven, by God, by Christ, by angels, by devils, by the finally miserable, and by themselves. It will be the real opinion of all, after attending the process of the great day, that every one, who shall have received the approbation of the final Judge, should be exalted to the honors, and distinctions, and enjoyments of the heavenly world, and there forever live under the smiles of their heavenly Father. And such a clear and decided opinion in the favor of the blessed, will add an inconceivable satisfaction to their minds forever.

7. We learn from what has been said, that all, who are excluded from heaven, will be excluded from it, by the unanimous voice of all moral beings. There will not be a dissenting voice in the dreadful sentence, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." All who shall meet with the disapprobation of the final Judge, will equally meet with the disapprobation of all the inhabitants of heaven and hell, together with the condemnation of their own enlightened consciences. It will appear clearly to the view of the universe, that all, who are condemned and punished, ought to be condemned and punished forever. Not one who is lost, will have one in heaven or in hell to take his part, or complain of his final and eternal destination. And what an intolerable weight will this add to that great and endless punishment, which shall fall upon the vessels of wrath, who are fitted for destruction!

This subject now admonishes all those, who trifle with moral things, and make a mock at sin, of their extreme guilt and danger. "Wo unto them that call

evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." The great day of light is coming, which will dissipate the mists and clouds, in which stupid sinners have concealed themselves, and which will expose their stupidity and guilt both to themselves, and to the universe. Then erroneous sinners, secret sinners, secure sinners, and skeptical sinners, will appear to themselves, and to all intelligent beings, in all their depravity, folly, and guilt, and become swift witnesses against themselves, that they have deserved the united, and eternal displeasure of the whole universe. Then it will be beyond their power to trifle with right and wrong, good and evil; or to despise the just and awful sentence, which will fix them in endless darkness, guilt, and despair. "Wo unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep." The universal contempt of God, of angels, and of men, will be more than your wounded, guilty souls can endure. "A man may sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear!"

## SERMON IV.

### ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

1 JOHN V, 7.

*For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.*

**IN** treating on revealed religion, men have often run into two extremes. Some have been fond of finding mysteries every where in the Bible; while others have been equally fond of exploding all mysteries from divine revelation. Here the truth seems to lie in the medium. Many parts of Scripture are plain and easy to be understood; but some parts are truly mysterious, and surpass the utmost limits of human comprehension. Of all religious mysteries, the distinction of persons in the Divine nature, must be allowed to be the greatest. Accordingly upon this subject, there has been the greatest absurdity as well as ingenuity displayed, in attempting to explain a real mystery. But though a mystery cannot be comprehended, nor consequently explained; yet it may be stated, and distinguished from a real absurdity. And this is the only object of the present discourse.

The words, which I have read, plainly represent the Divine Being as existing in a mysterious manner; though their primary intention is, to point out the united testimony of each person in the Godhead to the divinity of Christ. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost." The Father testified to the divinity of Christ at his baptism, when he declared with an

audible voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Holy Ghost testified to his divinity at the same time, by descending upon him in the form of a dove." And Christ testified to his divinity, by his public declarations and miraculous works. "And these three are one;" that is, one God, one Divine Being. This indeed, is a profound mystery, which calls for peculiar precaution in both speaker and hearer, lest the one should say or the other receive any thing, which should be derogatory to the supreme and incomprehensible Jehovah.

I shall first attempt to state the doctrine of the Trinity according to Scripture, and then endeavor to make it appear, that there is nothing in this doctrine, which is repugnant to the dictates of sound reason.

I. I shall attempt to show what conceptions the Scripture leads us to form of the peculiar mode of the divine existence. And here I may observe,

1. The Scripture leads us to conceive of God, the first and supreme Being, as existing in three distinct persons. I use this word, because there appears to be no better, in our language, by which to express that Trinity in Unity, which is peculiar to the one living and true God. Indeed, there is no word, in any language, which can convey a precise idea of this incomprehensible distinction in the divine nature; for it is not similar to any other distinction in the minds of moral beings. So that it is very immaterial, whether we use the name person, or any other name, or a circumlocution instead of a name, in discoursing upon this subject. Let me say, then, the one living and true God exists in such a manner, that there is a proper foundation in his nature, to speak of himself, in the first, second, and third person, and say I, Thou,

and He, meaning only Himself. This is a mode of existence, which is peculiar to the first and Supreme Being. No created being can properly speak of himself in any other than the first person, I. Thou and He, among creatures, denote another being as well as another person. But God can, with propriety, say I, Thou, and He, and mean only Himself. There is a certain SOMETHING in the divine Nature, which lays a proper foundation for such a personal distinction: But what that SOMETHING is, can neither be *described*, nor *conceived*. Here lies the whole mystery of the Trinity. And since this mystery cannot be comprehended, it is absurd to borrow any similitudes from either matter, or spirit, or from both united, in order to explain it. All the illustrations, which have ever been employed upon the mysterious mode of the divine existence, have always served to obscure, rather than elucidate the subject; because there is nothing in the whole circle of nature, which bears the least resemblance of three persons in one God.

Some have supposed, there is a resemblance between this doctrine and the union of soul, spirit, and body, in one man. But allowing, that man is made up of these three constituent parts; yet it is easy to perceive, that these three parts make but one person, as well as one man. For a man, speaking of himself, cannot say, *thy* soul, nor *his* soul; *thy* spirit, nor *his* spirit; *thy* body, nor *his* body; but only *my* soul, *my* spirit, *my* body. The single man, who is composed of soul, spirit, and body, is also a single person; but God is one Being in three persons. And here the similitude totally fails of illustrating the principal thing intended.

Some have endeavored to illustrate the distinction of persons in the divine Nature, by what they call the cardinal properties of the soul; namely, understand-

ing, will, and affections. But supposing this to be a proper analysis of the human mind; yet the similitude drawn from it, fails in the same respect that the former did. For these three properties of the soul are not *personal* properties; and *my* understanding, *my* will, *my* affections, are not *thine*, nor *his*, nor any second, nor third person's. Hence the similitude exhibits no illustration of three distinct persons, in the one undivided essence of the Deity.

Some would consider the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as one person as well as one being, acting in three distinct offices; as those of Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. And this idea of the Trinity in Unity, they would illustrate, by one man's sustaining three distinct offices; such as Justice, Senator, and Judge. But this, like every other similitude, only serves to sink or destroy the scripture doctrine of three persons in the one supreme, self-existent Being. The profound mystery of the Trinity, as represented in Scripture, necessarily carries in it a distinction of persons in the divine Essence. For nothing short of three distinct persons in the one undivided Deity, can render it proper for him to speak of Himself in the first, second, and third person, *I*, *Thou*, and *He*. Hence the Scripture represents the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as distinctly possessed of personal properties. The Father is represented as being able to understand, to will, and to act, of himself. The Son is represented as being able to understand, to will, and to act, of himself. And the Holy Ghost is represented as being able to understand, to will, and to act, of himself. According to these representations, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are three distinct persons or agents. Accordingly, they speak to and of each other as such. The Father speaks to and of his Son as a distinct person.

“Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” Again, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The Son speaks to and of the Father as a distinct person. “O! my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” Again, “It is my Father that honoreth me; of whom ye say that he is your God.” The Holy Ghost speaks of the Son as a distinct person. “As the Holy Ghost saith, To-day, if ye will hear his voice,” that is the voice of Christ, “harden not your hearts.” This mode of speaking plainly supposes, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are three distinct persons. And upon this ground, the one living and true God is called more than a hundred times, in Scripture, by a name in the plural number. But God’s speaking of himself in the same manner, carries much stronger evidence of his existing a Trinity in Unity. Thus we read, “God said, Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness.” Again we read, “The Lord God said, The man is become as one of *us*.” Again we read, “Go to; let *us* go down, and their confound their language.” And Isaiah says, “I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for *us*?” Thus the Scripture leads us to conceive of the one living and true God, as existing in three distinct persons, each of whom is possessed of all personal properties, and is able to understand, to will, and to act, as a free, voluntary, almighty Agent. Hence,

2. The Scripture represents the three Persons in the sacred Trinity, as absolutely equal in every divine perfection. We find the same names, the same attributes, and the same works ascribed to each person. Is the Father called God? the same name is given to the Son and Spirit. Are eternity, omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence ascribed to the Father? the same



divine attributes are ascribed to the Son and Spirit. Is the Father represented as concerned in the work of creation? the Son and Spirit are represented as equally concerned in it. Is the Father to be honored by religious worship? so are the Son and Spirit. All these representations of the divinity and equality of the three persons in the sacred Trinity are to be found in the Bible. Besides, this clearly appears from what was said under the first particular. For that mysterious Something in the divine Nature, which lays a foundation for three persons in the one living and true God, lays an equal foundation for their absolute equality. It is as necessary, that each person in the Trinity should be equal, as that each person should exist. For that, which is the ground of their existence, is the ground of their being absolutely equal in every divine perfection.

3. The Scripture represents the three equally divine Persons in the Trinity, as acting in a certain order, in the work of redemption. Though they are absolutely equal, in Nature; yet in Office, the first person is superior to the second, and the second is superior to the third. The Father holds the office of Creator, the Son the office of Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost the office of Sanctifier. The Father is represented as sending the Son, and the Son is represented as sending the Holy Ghost. The Son acts in subordination to the Father; and the Spirit acts in subordination to the Son and Father both. It is the dictate of wisdom, that where two or more persons act in concert, that they should act in Order. The three equally divine Persons act in concert in the work of redemption; and for that reason, they act in Order, or in subordination one to another. And this superiority and inferiority of Office is the sole foundation of all that *nom-*

inal inequality, which the Scripture represents as subsisting between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in carrying into effect their purposes of grace.

4. The Scripture teaches us, that each of the divine Persons takes his peculiar Name from the peculiar office, which he sustains in the Economy of redemption. Each person has a peculiar name given to him in the text. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost." The first Person assumes the name of Father, because he is by Office the Creator, or Author of all things, and especially of the human nature of Christ. The second Person assumes the name of Son and Word, by virtue of his incarnation; and mediatorial conduct. The Angel, who predicted his birth, intimated to his Mother that he should be called the Son of God, on account of his incarnation. "The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." Christ is called the Word, in reference to his mediatorial conduct. His great business in this world was to unfold the divine purposes. Hence we read, in the first chapter of John, where he is repeatedly called the Word; "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son who was in the bosom of the Father, *he hath declared him.*" It is equally evident, that the third Person in the Trinity is called the Holy Ghost, on account of his peculiar office as Sanctifier. No other reason can be assigned for his having this peculiar name. He is not essentially more holy than the Father, or Son. But in as much as it is his peculiar office, to apply the redemption procured by Christ, by renewing the hearts of sinners, and making them willing, in the

day of his power, to embrace the offers of mercy, he may be properly called the *Holy Ghost*.

The distinct office, which each Person in the sacred Trinity sustains, in carrying on the work of redemption, lays a proper foundation for the distinct and peculiar name given to each in Scripture. Nor can we derive these names from any other origin. Though there be a foundation in the nature of the Deity, for a distinction of Persons; yet we cannot conceive, that there is the same foundation in his nature, for calling the first Person Father, the second Person Son, and the third Person Holy Ghost. These names clearly appear to originate from the work of redemption, and probably were unknown in heaven until the purposes of grace were there revealed. It is certain, however, that they cannot be supposed to be derived from any original difference between the three Persons in the Godhead, without destroying their Equality, and of consequence, their Divinity. I may add,

5: The Scripture represents these three divine Persons as *One God*. This is the plain language of the text. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and *these three are one*." Our Lord clearly taught the union between himself and the Father. He asserted, that he dwelt in the Father, and the Father in him. And he said in plain terms, "I and my Father are one" It appears from the light of nature, that there is *one* God; and it appears from the light of divine revelation, that there is *but One*. The Holy One of Israel declares, "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no god. Is there a god beside me? yea, there is no god: I know not any." If there be but *One* God, then it necessarily follows, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are not three *Gods*, but only three *Per-*

*sons* in one self-existent, independent, eternal Being. The three Persons are not one Person, but one God. Or the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are three in respect to their personality, and but one in respect to their nature and essence. I now proceed to show,

II. That the Scriptural account of the mysterious doctrine of the sacred Trinity, is not repugnant to the dictates of sound reason. Those, who disbelieve, that God exists a Trinity in Unity, suppose, that such a mode of existence is not only above reason, but contrary to its plainest dictates. They consider the doctrine of three Persons in one God, not as a profound mystery, but as a gross absurdity. And it must be granted that any doctrine is absurd, and ought to be exploded, which is really contrary to the dictates of sound reason. The only wise God can no more require us to believe that, which is absurd, than he can command us to do that, which is sinful. If we can clearly perceive, therefore, that there is a real absurdity in the doctrine of the Trinity, we ought not to believe it. But, perhaps, if we candidly attend to what may be said, under this head of discourse, we shall be convinced, that the Scriptural doctrine of the Trinity is no absurdity, but a great and glorious mystery; which lays a broad and solid foundation, upon which we may safely build our hopes of a blessed immortality. Here it may be proper to observe,

1. The doctrine of the Trinity, as represented in Scripture, implies no contradiction. Any doctrine, which necessarily involves a contradiction, is repugnant to reason, and demonstrably false. For it is out of the power of the human mind to conceive, that a real contradiction should be true. We cannot conceive, that two and three are equal to ten, nor that ten and five are equal to twenty. We cannot conceive

or incomprehensible. And whoever now objects against the Scripture account of the sacred Trinity, would have equally objected against any other account, which God could have given of his peculiar mode of existence. I may add,

3. The doctrine of the Trinity, as represented in Scripture, is no more repugnant to the dictates of sound reason, than many other doctrines, which all Christians believe concerning God. God is truly incomprehensible by creatures. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" All, who believe the existence of the Deity, must believe mysteries, which no human understanding can fathom. Here permit me to mention several things respecting God which are commonly believed, and which are as mysterious as his existing in three Persons.

It is generally believed, that God is a *self-existent* Being, or that there is no cause or ground of his existence out of Himself. But who can explain this mode of existence, or even form any clear conception of it? There must be some ground or foundation of God's existence; and to say that this is wholly within Himself, is to say something, of which we can frame no clear, or distinct idea. It is only saying, that the ground of God's existence is mysterious. And is it not as repugnant to the dictates of sound reason to say, that the ground of God's existence is mysterious, as to say that the ground of his existing in three Persons is mysterious? These two cases are exactly parallel. There is a certain SOMETHING in the divine Being, which renders his existence absolutely necessary. This all must believe, who believe that God exists. And so there is a certain SOMETHING in the divine Being, which renders it equally necessary, that he should exist in three Per-

sons. It is, therefore, easy to see, that there is nothing more repugnant to right reason, in the doctrine of the Trinity, than in the doctrine of God's self existence. Again,

It is generally believed, that God is constantly present in all places, or that his presence perpetually fills the whole created universe. But can we frame any clear ideas of this universal presence of the Deity? It seems to be repugnant to reason, to suppose that his presence is *extended*, because extension appears to be incompatible with the nature of a pure Spirit. And if his presence be not extended, it is impossible for us to conceive, how it should reach and fill all places, at all times. The moment we attentively consider the universal presence of the supreme Being, we are involved in a mystery, as profound as that of three Persons in one God. Once more,

It is generally believed, that God is the Creator, who has made all things out of nothing. But it was a maxim with the ancient atheistical philosophers, that it is a contradiction to say, that God made all things out of nothing; that is, without any pre-existent materials. And it is supposed by many, who have had more light upon this subject, that creation is no more than an *emanation* of the Deity, or that God only *diffuses* his own existence in giving existence to other beings. Indeed, a strict and proper creation of all things out of nothing, has appeared to many great and learned men, as *contrary* to every dictate of reason. They have considered it, not merely as a difficulty, or mystery, but as a real absurdity. And whoever will critically attend to the subject, will probably find it as difficult to reconcile the doctrine of a strict and proper creation to the dictates of his own reason, as the doctrine of three Persons in one God. That a fountain should be diffused into

streams, or the whole be divided into parts, is easy to conceive; but these similitudes do not touch the case of a strict and proper creation. For in creation, God does not diffuse himself; since created objects are no part of the Deity: nor does he divide himself; since the Creator is not capable of a division into a multiplicity of parts. God neither made the world of pre-existent materials, nor of Himself; but he made it out of nothing, that is, gave it a proper and real existence, distinct from his own. Creation is the effect of nothing but mere Power. But of that Power which is able to create, or produce something out of nothing, we can form no manner of conception. This attribute of the Deity, therefore, is as really mysterious and incomprehensible, in its operation, as the doctrine of the Trinity. Or it is a mystery that looks as much like an absurdity, as that of God's existing in three Persons. There is nothing in the doctrine of the Trinity, as represented in this discourse, which is more repugnant to the dictates of sound reason, than the doctrine of a strict and proper creation, the doctrine of the divine omnipresence, or even the doctrine of the divine existence. And we must be extremely inconsistent, if we believe the Being, and works of the great Creator; and, at the same time, disbelieve that he exists one God in three Persons, according to the general representation of the sacred Scriptures.

I shall now close the subject, with a few brief remarks.

REMARK 1.—If the doctrine of the sacred Trinity has been properly stated in this discourse, then there seems to be no just foundation for the doctrine of the Eternal Generation of the Son, and of the Eternal Procession of the Holy Ghost. Many have supposed, that the Son, the second Person in the Trinity, is, in

some mysterious manner, *begotten* of the Father; and the Holy Ghost, the third Person in the Trinity, is, in the same mysterious manner, eternally *proceeding* from the Father and Son both. They found this opinion upon several passages of Scripture, which I have not time to consider; but without a particular consideration of them, we may safely conclude, that they do not contain sentiments so plainly contrary to our clearest apprehensions. To suppose, that the Son, with respect to his divine nature, was begotten of the Father, and that the Holy Ghost proceeded from the concurrence of the Father and Son, is to suppose, that a Trinity of Persons is not founded in the divine Nature, but merely in the divine Will. For, on this supposition, if the Father had not pleased to *beget* the Son, and the Father and Son had not pleased to *produce* the Holy Ghost, there could have been no Trinity of Persons in the Godhead. Besides, this opinion sets the Son as far below the Father, as a creature is below the Creator; and sets the Holy Ghost as far below the Son, as he is below the Father, or rather it makes the Holy Ghost, a creature of a creature! There are no ideas, which we can affix to the words, *beget*, *produce*, or *proceed*, but must involvè in them an infinite inequality between the three sacred Persons in the adorable Trinity. On this ground, we feel constrained to reject the eternal *generation* of the Son, and the eternal *procession* of the Holy Ghost, as such mysteries as cannot be distinguished from real absurdities, and as such doctrines as strike at the foundation of the true doctrine of three equally divine Persons in one God.

REMARK 2.—The doctrine of the sacred Trinity, as represented in Scripture, gives us a clear and striking view of the Allsufficiency of God. Since he exists in three equally divine Persons, there is a permanent



foundation in his own Nature, for the most pure and perfect blessedness. Society is the source of the highest felicity. And that society affords the greatest enjoyment, which is composed of persons of the same character, of the same disposition, of the same designs, and of the same pursuits. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who are three equally divine Persons in the one living and true God, are perfectly united in all these respects; and therefore God's existing a Trinity in Unity, necessarily renders him the allsufficient source of his own most perfect felicity. We cannot conceive of any other mode of existence so absolutely perfect and blessed. Besides, this most perfect and blessed mode of God's existence, lays the only possible foundation of the happiness of his sinful and perishing creatures. If the God, whom we had offended, had not existed a Trinity in Unity, we cannot conceive how he could have formed and executed the present plan of our redemption. Had there been but one Person in the Deity, there could have been no Mediator between God and men. But as God existed in three Persons, the Father was able to send his Son to redeem us, and his Spirit to sanctify us, and make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Hence we are naturally led to see and admire the allsufficiency of God, which ultimately results from his existing in three equally divine and glorious Persons.

REMARK 3.—What has been said, in this discourse, may show us the importance of understanding and believing the Scripture doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity. Unless we understand and believe this great and mysterious doctrine, it will be extremely difficult to answer the objections of the Deists against the Bible; which plainly represents the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as three equally divine Persons, and yet as

serts there is but one God. And this doctrine is so interwoven with the whole scheme of the gospel, that we cannot possibly explain the great work of Redemption, in a clear and consistent manner, without adopting and believing the personal characters and offices of the three divine Persons in the sacred Trinity. This is evident from the peculiar phraseology of Scripture; and no less evident from observation. All who have exploded the mystery of the Trinity from the Bible, have shaken, if not destroyed, the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. The gospel is so absolutely and obviously founded on the doctrine of three Persons in one God, that whoever denies this great and fundamental truth, must, in order to be consistent, deny all the peculiarities which distinguish *revealed* religion from *natural*. And if this be true, every friend of divine Revelation must feel the importance of understanding, believing, and maintaining the first principle of his religion.

REMARK 4.—The joint operations of the ever blessed Trinity, lay a foundation for the most perfect and blessed Union, among all *holy* Beings. Each divine Person bears a distinct part in the work of Redemption; and each will be infinitely well pleased with the conduct of each. They will mutually rejoice in the great good, which will be the fruit of their united exertions. And saints and angels will join in their communion. There will be the same kind of holy union and communion between saints and angels, and the three divine Persons in the sacred Trinity, that there will be between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And such a union and communion between all the inhabitants of heaven, will afford the most consummate felicity. This glorious hope and prospect Christ exhibited before his sorrowful disciples, just be-

fore he left them, and ascended to his Father and to their Father; to his God and to their God. His words are memorable; and O! that they might be written on the heart of every one of his followers, as with the point of a diamond; and become a perpetual source of divine consolation and support. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also that shall believe on me through their word. That they all may be *one*; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that *they also* may be *one* in *us*: that they may be *one*, even as *we* are *one*: I in them, and thou in me, that *they* may be made *perfect* in *one*." Amen.

## SERMON V.

### AFFECTIONS ESSENTIAL TO THE MORAL PERFECTION OF THE DEITY.

1 JOHN iv, 8. *For God is love.*

WHILE Simonides resided at the court of Syracuse, the king had the curiosity to ask him—What is God? The poet desired a day to consider the question; on the morrow he requested two days; and as often as he was called upon for an answer, he doubled the time. At length the king grew impatient, and demanded the reason of his conduct. It is, replied Simonides, because the more I consider the question, the more obscure it seems. Though creatures cannot comprehend the essence of their Creator, yet they may form some clear and just conceptions of his great and amiable attributes. The text exhibits the brightest part of his character. “God is love.” This is a just and full description of his moral perfections. His holiness, justice, goodness, and mercy, are but so many modifications of divine love. But in order to understand the full import of the text, we must still further inquire, what is meant by love, when ascribed to an absolutely perfect and immutable Being. Here analogy is our only guide. We are obliged, in this case, to reason from love in man to love in the Deity. We all know by experience, that love belongs to the *heart*, and not to the *intellect*. This naturally leads us to conclude, that love in the Deity denotes a *moral*, and not an *intellectual* exercise, or that it belongs to his *heart*, and not to his *understanding*. Hence the declaration in the

text, *that God is love*, plainly supposes, that God is possessed of Affections.

This doctrine needs both illustration and proof.

Many suppose, that all propensities, inclinations, dispositions, or affections, are incompatible with the perfection of the divine nature. Some eminent divines, as well as metaphysicians, maintain this opinion; in which they seem to approach nearer to the sentiments of Epicurus, than to those of the sacred Writers. Epicurus said, "The Deity could neither be influenced by *favor*, nor *resentment*; because such a being must be weak and frail: and also, that all fear of the power and *anger* of God should be banished, because *anger* and *affection* are inconsistent with the nature of a happy and immortal Being." But in direct opposition to this sentiment, our doctrine asserts, that God has real and proper affections; that he is pleased with some objects, and displeased with others; that he feels and exercises love, pity, compassion, and every affection which can flow from perfect benevolence.

It must, however, be observed, that God is a pure Spirit, who has no affections, which resemble those bodily instincts and passions, which are to be found in the present state of human nature. The best of men, here on earth, carry about with them some remains of selfishness, pride, envy, and other sinful passions. But God is perfect love, and all his affections are pure and clear as the crystal stream. There is a foundation for fear, and faith, and hope, and confidence, in the very nature of finite dependent beings; but there is no foundation for these affections in the Supreme Being, whose power and knowledge are independent and unlimited. God is infinitely above all instincts, passions, or affections, which proceed from either

natural or moral imperfection. These, therefore, we ought never to ascribe to the Deity.

Having briefly explained the doctrine of divine affections, I proceed to offer several considerations in support of it.

1. Benevolent affections form the moral beauty of the divine character. God is love. In this alone consists his moral excellence. His independence, almighty power, and unerring wisdom, are mere natural perfections; but his benevolent feelings are moral beauties. Benevolence appears virtuous and amiable in any moral agent. It is the highest ornament of angels and men, and the supreme glory of the supreme Being. No natural excellencies can supply the place of benevolent feelings. This clearly appears in the case of the fallen angels. They still retain all the noble powers and faculties, with which they were created; but having lost their original benevolent feelings, they are become the most odious and detestable creatures in the universe. And could we only suppose, that the divine Being were totally divested of all these affections, which flow from universal benevolence, we could not discover a single trait of moral beauty in his moral character. A malevolent being of infinite power and knowledge, would appear infinitely odious and terrible. And only take away all benevolent feelings from the Deity, and he would necessarily appear in this light, to all intelligent creatures. We have, therefore, just as much reason to believe, that God is possessed of affections, as we have, that he is possessed of any moral beauty or excellence.

2. Men are required to imitate their heavenly Father. This plainly supposes, that there is something in the kind Parent of the universe, which may be imitated. But the power, wisdom, and all the natural

perfections of the Deity, are above imitation. There is nothing in the nature of God, which any of his creatures can imitate, except his benevolent feelings. These are imitable, and these he calls upon mankind to imitate. "Be ye holy; for I am holy." Agreeably to this, the Apostle says, "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children." Our Savior also strongly inculcates the same duty. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you: That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them who love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Here Christ first requires men to imitate God, and then points out the proper way to imitate him; which is to feel as he feels, or to exercise the same tender and benevolent affections, which he exercises in the course of his common providence. It appears, therefore, from both the nature and exposition, of this divine command, that true and proper affections do really exist in the divine mind. Besides,

3. The Scriptures ascribe affections to God in the most plain and unequivocal terms. We often read of the *heart* of God, which means neither his power, nor wisdom, nor any natural perfection, but his kind and benevolent feelings. This is the proper sense of the word *heart*, and in this sense God uses it in ap-

plication to himself. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? *Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.*" The Scripture often speaks of God's being *pleased* and *delighted*; which plainly supposes, that he is possessed of affections, which are the highest source of mental enjoyment. We read, "The Lord *taketh pleasure* in them that fear him." We are told, "The prayer of the upright is *his delight.*" And God himself declared by a voice from heaven at the baptism of Christ, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am *well pleased.*" These representations are agreeable to our natural conception of him, who is God over all *blessed forever*. We furthermore find a great variety of particular affections ascribed to the Deity. To him is ascribed *love*: "God is love." To him is ascribed *joy*: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty: he will save thee, he will *rejoice* over thee with *joy.*" To him is ascribed *pity*: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." To him is ascribed *zeal*: "The *zeal* of the Lord of hosts will do this." To him is ascribed *anger*: "The Lord is *angry* with the wicked every day." To him is ascribed *vengeance*: "*Vengeance* is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." In a word, we find every virtuous affection, that is, every affection, which can flow from pure benevolence, ascribed to God in Scripture. It appears, therefore, from revelation as well as from reason, that God is possessed of affections. But notwithstanding the plain and positive evidence in favor of this doctrine, it may be proper to take notice of some things, which may be said against it.



1. It may be said, that the passages, which ascribe affections to God, are figurative, and ought not to be taken in a literal sense.

This objection is more specious than solid. We are never to depart from the literal sense of Scripture, without some apparent necessity. If any passage will bear a literal sense, we ought to take it literally, unless the nature of the subject, or the connexion of the words, or some other texts of Scripture, require a figurative meaning. When God is represented as having bodily members, such as eyes, ears, hands, or feet, the dictates of reason and the general tenor of Scripture oblige us to understand the expressions in a figurative sense. But when God is said to have love, joy, pity, and all other benevolent affections, there is no occasion of departing from the plain and literal sense of the words. For, such affections are neither contrary to the nature of things, nor to the nature and character of an absolutely perfect Being. By all the just rules of interpretation, therefore, we are constrained to understand the passages, which ascribe affections to God, in their plain, obvious, literal sense.

2. It may be said, that affections are painful, and consequently cannot belong to God, who is perfectly happy.

It is true, affections are always painful, when they cannot be gratified; and this is often the case among mankind. Sometimes their affections give them pain, because they want power to attain the objects of their desire; and sometimes because their desires are so selfish and inconsistent, that if they gratify one of their affections, they must necessarily mortify another. But since all the affections of the Deity are only different modifications of pure, disinterested benevolence, they admit of a constant and perfect gratification; and

since he is able with infinite ease to attain every desirable object, his affections are always gratified, and always afford him a source of complete and permanent felicity. But,

3. It may be asked, "How is this notion of divine affections compatible with that perfect immutability and simplicity, which all divines ascribe to the Deity? By the same act, say they, he sees the past, present, and future. His love and hatred, his mercy and justice, are one individual operation. He is entire in every point of space; and complete in every instant of duration. No succession, no change, no acquisition, no diminution. What he is implies not in it any shadow of distinction or diversity."

The subtle objector himself gives the following reply: "Though it be allowed, that Deity possesses attributes of which we have no conception; yet ought we never to ascribe to him any attributes, which are absolutely incompatible with that intelligent nature essential to him. A mind, whose acts and sentiments and ideas are not distinct and successive; one, that is wholly simple, and totally immutable; is a mind, which has no thought, no reason, no will, no sentiment, no love, no hatred; or, in a word, is no mind at all. It is an abuse of terms to give it that appellation; and we may as well speak of limited extension without figure, or of numbers without composition." Whatever this author might have intended by this answer, it appears very pertinent and conclusive.

But we may further observe here, that there is a plain distinction between such a mutability as does, and such a mutability as does not, imply imperfection. If God were to change his purposes or designs, this would be a blemish in his character; because this would imply a want of either power, or wisdom, or

goodness. And if he should change his affections without any change in the object of them, this would also discover imperfection, and prove that his affections were wrong either before, or after he changed them. If a man should love a person to-day and hate him to-morrow, or if he should hate a person to-day and love him to-morrow, without any alteration in the person's character, this would manifest a fickle and sinful disposition. But God is subject to no such mutability as has been mentioned. He never changes his purposes or designs; because these were formed under the influence of perfect goodness and unerring wisdom. Nor does he ever change his affections, unless the objects of them change; and in that case to change his affections argues no imperfection. If a man, who was a sinner yesterday, becomes a saint to-day, it implies no imperfection in God to change his affections towards that person, and love him to-day, whom he abhorred yesterday. The doctrine of divine affections, therefore, supposes no mutability in the Supreme Being, but what is a beauty and perfection in his character.

#### IMPROVEMENT.

1. This subject may give us some faint conception of the strength and ardency of the divine affections. God is infinite in all his attributes. His *moral* perfections bear a just proportion to his *natural*. All his feelings are infinitely strong. His love is omnipotent love; his wrath is omnipotent wrath. The inspired writers, therefore, seize the boldest images in nature, to display the beauty, and strength, and terror, of the divine affections.

By the love of the bridegroom to the bride, they represent the love of God to his people. "As the

bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." By the pity of a father to his children, they represent the pity of God to the afflicted. "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." By the fondness of a mother for the infant of her womb, they represent the compassion of God to his church. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." How terrible is the wrath of the furious beasts of prey! Yet their wrath is but a faint image of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God to the wicked. "Therefore I will be unto them, saith the Lord, as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them. I will meet them as a bear bereaved of her whelps, and I will rend the caul of their hearts, and there will I devour them like a lion." God loves and hates with all his heart, with all his mind, and with all his strength. There is something infinitely amiable and awful in the divine affections.

2. In the view of this subject we may discover what it was, which moved God to the work of creation. It is generally and justly supposed, that God was perfectly blessed in the enjoyment of himself from all eternity; but perfect blessedness seems to exclude all motive to action. Why should a being move, who has nothing to gain by moving? Why should a being act, who has nothing to gain by acting? Why should a being exert himself, who has nothing to gain by his exertions? What, then, could move God, who was perfectly happy before the foundation of the world, to bring it into existence? This difficulty will immediately vanish, if we only consider the source of the divine blessedness. God is love, and all his happiness

flows from the perfect gratification of all his benevolent feelings. But these could never have been completely gratified, without displaying all his perfections in the work of creation. God being from eternity all sufficient and infinitely benevolent, must have had an infinitely strong propensity to exert his omnipotent power in the production of holiness and happiness. Hence it was morally impossible, that he should have been perfectly blessed, without devising and performing the work of creation. The doctrine of divine affections, therefore, clearly shows us not only, that God *might* have had *some motive* to create the world, but also, that his own enjoyment, felicity, or blessedness, *was that motive*.

3. It appears from what has been said, that God is pleased with the existence of every thing, which takes place in the universe. His heart is in all his works. He feels interested in all events. And we know, that the stronger the affections of any being are, the more pain and distress he feels, whenever they are crossed or disappointed. If, therefore, all things do not take place, just as the Deity desired and intended, his infinitely strong desires and affections are deeply wounded. But it is the universal voice of Scripture, as well as the dictate of reason, that God is infinitely above the reach of pain, and enjoys the most perfect and permanent felicity. Though, therefore, there are ten thousand things constantly taking place in the world, which are in their own nature disagreeable to the Deity; yet there never did, and never will one single event exist, which, all things considered, he did not choose and intend should actually exist.

4. This subject suggests matter of great consolation to those, who are interested in the divine favor. God hath set them as a seal upon his heart, and as a

seal upon his arm. Though their love may wax cold, yet his love will never cease; though they may forget him, yet he will never forget them. He will keep them in the hollow of his hand, and guard them as the apple of his eye. He will cause all things to work together for their good. He will raise them as high in holiness and happiness, as infinite power, wisdom, and goodness can raise them. With what joy and transport, therefore, may they look up to God and say, "Whom have we in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that we desire beside thee. Thy favor is life; and thy loving kindness is better than life!"

5. This subject warns sinners to flee from the wrath to come. God is angry with the wicked every day, and his wrath continually abides upon them. And though he now waits to be gracious to them, and endures them with much long suffering and patience; yet, unless they repent and become cordially reconciled to him, he will whet his glittering sword, and his hand will take hold on judgment, and he will give them a just recompense of reward. It will be a terrible thing for sinners to fall into the hands of the living God, who is a consuming fire, and whose wrath will burn to the lowest hell. But God is now seated on a throne of grace. Let the wicked therefore forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

## SERMON VI.

### THE GLORY OF GOD ILLUSTRATED.

EXODUS xxxiii, 18, 19.

*And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee.*

MOSES became early acquainted with God. He enjoyed peculiar manifestations of his favor in the family of Pharaoh. In his retirement in Midian, he maintained, for forty years, a near and familiar intercourse with the Deity. At length, he was called to the great and arduous work of leading the people of God from the house of bondage to the land of promise. This gave him still better opportunities of seeing the glory of God, and of enjoying the manifestations of his love. God freely conversed with him, face to face, as a man converses with his friend. He not only saw the displays of divine vengeance in the plagues poured upon Egypt, and the displays of divine love in the mercies granted to Israel; but he was let into the designs of the Deity, and employed as an instrument of making them known to his people. Under these happy circumstances, he made a rapid progress, both in the knowledge and the love of God. The more he saw of the divine glory, at one time, the more he wished to see of it, at another. Having just been interceding with God to pardon his people, for making and worshipping the golden calf, and having received assurance that God would both preserve and guide them through the wilderness, by his gracious and visible presence; he

makes a particular request for himself, which though God seems to deny, yet he more than grants. The request is, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." The answer is, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." The promise of God here seems to surpass the petition of Moses. He desires a visible display of God's visible glory. This God denies, but promises to give him something better, even a bright display of his moral glory. "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." These words, in this connexion, plainly teach us,

That God necessarily displays all his glory, by displaying all his goodness.

To illustrate this subject, I shall,

I. Consider what is to be understood by the glory of God.

II. Consider what is to be understood by his displaying all his goodness.

III. Show, that by doing this, he necessarily displays all his glory.

I. Let us consider what we are to understand by the glory of God. The glory of any moral agent is that intrinsic moral excellence, which renders him worthy of approbation and esteem. This is never seated in the understanding, but in the heart. There is no moral excellence in a man's intellectual powers, but only in his disposition to employ them to some valuable purpose. All intrinsic moral excellence lies in the heart. Here we always look for it, and here only can we ever find it. A man who possesses a good heart, or a truly benevolent disposition, is a man of real worth. Such is our idea of the glory of a finite, rational, moral agent. And since we derive our first ideas of glory from rational and benevolent creatures, we are obliged to consider the glory of God to be of the



same nature with the glory of other moral beings. Accordingly, we must suppose, that the glory of God is that intrinsic moral excellence, which is seated in his heart, and which renders him worthy of the supreme love and homage of all his intelligent creatures. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he: and as God thinketh in his heart, so is he. God is love. And in this consists his real, intrinsic, supreme, moral excellence and glory. I proceed,

II. To consider what is to be understood by God's displaying all his goodness. His promise to Moses is very singular and very significant. "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." That God may display all his goodness, he must do two things.

1. He must display his goodness to as high a degree as possible. Though there be no degrees of goodness in God himself, yet there must be degrees of displaying it to creatures of limited capacities. God, who knows all things, knows the highest degree, to which his goodness can be displayed. He is perfectly acquainted with the capacities of all his creatures, and with all the ways of displaying his goodness to the view of their minds. And unless he gives them as clear and full a display of his goodness, as they are capable of beholding, it cannot be said, with propriety, that he displays all his goodness. But when he displays as much of his goodness as they are capable of comprehending, then he may be said in that respect, to display all his goodness.

2. God's displaying all his goodness further implies his displaying it in all its branches, and agreeably to the various natures and characters of his dependent creatures. In particular,

1. It implies displaying his *benevolence* towards all sensitive natures. Nothing more is necessary to ren-

der any creature the proper object of benevolence, than a mere capacity of enjoying happiness and suffering pain. And as all the creatures of God possess this capacity; so they are all the objects of his benevolent feelings. He hears the young ravens when they cry. He opens his hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing. He is good unto all; and his tender mercies are over all his works. He regards with a benevolent eye, the highest angel, and the lowest insect. His perfect goodness is perfect benevolence towards all the proper objects of benevolence. And it is impossible, that he should display all his goodness, without displaying universal benevolence towards all his creatures, whether rational or irrational, whether virtuous or vicious. Mere benevolence has no respect to character, but only to capacity. And, therefore, God displays his benevolent regards to the lowest as well as the highest, and to the worst as well as to the best, of his creatures.

2. In order to display all his goodness, God must display his complacency towards all holy beings. The goodness of the Deity naturally and necessarily inclines him to love goodness, wherever he sees it. Those creatures, therefore, who are virtuous and holy, are the objects of his complacency and delight. He not only desires their happiness, but loves their characters. Accordingly we read; "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him. The Lord loveth the righteous." And to Zion it is said, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty: he will save thee, he will rejoice over thee with joy: he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." God loved Moses, and manifested his love to him, by conversing freely with him, as a man converses with his friend. John

was the beloved disciple of Christ, who allowed him to lean on his bosom. And Christ says, all that love him are loved of his Father. God loves all who bear his moral image, from the highest seraph to the lowest saint. Hence he cannot display all his goodness, without displaying his love of complacency towards all amiable, holy, virtuous beings.

3. Another branch of divine goodness is grace towards the guilty and ill-deserving. This God explicitly declares is implied in his goodness, and must be manifested in displaying it. "I will make all my goodness pass before thee; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy to whom I will shew mercy." The goodness of God as it respects sinners, is grace, or mercy, or compassion, or that disposition, which leads him to pardon their offences. Perfect goodness is perfect grace to the guilty. So it is more fully represented in the chapter succeeding the text, where we have an account of God's displaying his goodness agreeably to his promise to Moses. "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed; The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." God's forgiving goodness, or pardoning love, lay at the foundation of the work of redemption. All the blessings of the gospel, and even the gospel itself, took their rise from this branch of divine goodness, which is more celebrated in Scripture, than any other beauty in the divine character. Our Savior declares, "God *so loved* the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Paul says in the fifth of Romans, "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners"

Christ died for us. But where sin abounded, *grace* did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might *grace* reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." And he celebrates divine grace in stronger terms still, in the second of Ephesians. "But God, who is *rich in mercy*, for *his great love* wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ: *by grace are ye saved*; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in ages to come he might *show the exceeding riches of his grace* in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." Such a display of divine grace is absolutely necessary, in order to give a full display of divine goodness. It must be observed,

4. That another branch of God's goodness is distributive justice, or a disposition to *punish* impenitent sinners according to their deeds. Such vindictive justice God manifested, when he made all his goodness pass before Moses. Having proclaimed himself as forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, he adds, "And that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children unto the third and fourth generation." This must mean his punishing the impenitent, because it is set in contrast with his forgiving the penitent. And God often declares, that he has not only a right, but a disposition to punish incorrigible sinners. "See now that I, even I am he, and there is no God with me. I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal;—If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold of judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me." To this the Apostle refers, when he says to christians,

“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay saith the Lord.” It must be the nature of a perfectly good being to feel affections exactly correspondent to the characters and dispositions of his reasonable creatures. As God loves the good, so he must hate the evil; and as he is disposed to reward the good, so he must be disposed to punish the evil. Accordingly David represents God as feeling and conducting in this manner. “With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright; with the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.” In another place, the Psalmist calls upon the church to praise God for the displays of his goodness, in punishing the wicked. “O give thanks unto the Lord, *for he is good*; for his *mercy* endureth forever. To him that smote Egypt in their first born: for his *mercy* endureth forever. To him that overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea: for his *mercy* endureth forever. To him that smote great kings: for his *mercy* endureth forever.” God’s goodness is a consuming fire to the finally impenitent, and will burn to the lowest hell. And this amiable attribute of vindictive justice must be displayed, in order to a full display of divine goodness. Thus God displays all his goodness, when he displays it in the highest possible degree, and in every possible way. It is impossible to conceive, that a more clear and full display of goodness than this, can be made by the greatest and best of Beings. It remains to show,

III. That God, by thus displaying *all* his goodness, necessarily displays *all* his glory. This is plainly supposed in the text. Moses prays, that God would show him *his glory*, and God replies, “I will make *all* my

goodness pass before thee." There appears no pertinency in this reply, unless the Deity would necessarily display *all* his glory, by displaying *all* his goodness. But the truth of this will more fully appear, if we consider,

1. That when God displays all his goodness, he displays *all his moral character*. The Supreme Being has no moral excellence but what is included in his goodness. God is love; all his goodness consists in love; all his love lies in his heart; and his heart is the seat of all his moral excellence. By displaying all his heart, therefore, he necessarily displays all his moral character. But he displays all his heart when he displays all his goodness. For all the feelings of his heart are goodness itself. So that it is impossible for God to display all his goodness, without displaying all his feelings; and when all his feelings are expressed or acted out, his whole heart and all his moral excellence is displayed. Besides,

2. When God displays all his goodness, he necessarily displays all his *natural* as well as *moral* excellence. Self-existence, independence, omnipresence, almighty power, boundless knowledge, and infinite wisdom, form the natural excellence or glory of God. But all these natural attributes derive their real glory from his goodness, without which they would be a blemish, rather than a beauty, in his character. When his natural perfections are under the influence of perfect goodness, and exercised to display it, then they appear in all their glory: but could we suppose them to be disconnected with perfect goodness, and under the influence of a malevolent heart, they would appear infinitely odious and terrible; and form the most malignant and detestable character conceivable. It is the goodness of God, which stamps a beauty and

glory upon all his natural attributes. Accordingly, when he displays all his goodness, he necessarily displays all the glory of his natural perfections. The full display of his goodness requires the highest exertions of his power, wisdom, and knowledge. All these must be exerted, in order to form and execute a scheme, which is calculated to promote the highest possible good of the universe. If God displays all his goodness, therefore, he must necessarily display all his greatness. This connexion between the displays of goodness and greatness we find in men. Moses could not display all his goodness, without displaying all his greatness. Paul could not display all his goodness, without displaying all his greatness. And Christ could not display all the feelings of his heart, without displaying all the perfections of his nature. So the Supreme Being cannot display all his *moral*, without displaying all his *natural* attributes. God has no glory but what consists in and is derived from his goodness; and, therefore, by displaying all his goodness, he must necessarily display all his glory. Having illustrated the several particulars proposed, it remains to draw a number of plain and important inferences from what has been said.

1. If God be a Being, who possesses and displays perfect goodness; then the religion which he has required of mankind, is a reasonable service. He saith to every one, who is capable of understanding his word, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." Supreme love to God is the sum and comprehension of all that religion which he has enjoined upon men. And if he be a Being of supreme moral excellence, then he is worthy of the supreme affection of all his reasonable creatures. It is neither superstition, nor

enthusiasm, to love, to fear, to obey, to worship, and to adore, the greatest and best of Beings. Rational creatures cannot give a brighter display of their rationality, than in discerning the supreme excellencies of their Creator, nor a brighter display of their goodness, than in giving him the supreme affection of their hearts. If it be reasonable to love any object, it is reasonable to love the most amiable object. If it be reasonable to esteem any object, it is reasonable to esteem that which has the greatest natural and moral excellence. If it be reasonable to obey any being, it is reasonable to obey Him, whose will is perfect rectitude. If it be reasonable to submit to the government of any being, it is reasonable to submit to the government of Him, who always knows and always does what is best. If it be reasonable to worship any being, it is reasonable to worship Him, who is infinitely the greatest and best of all Beings. The religion, which God requires, is founded in the nature of things, and must remain a reasonable service on the part of man, as long as he retains his rational nature, and God possesses supreme natural and moral excellence.

2. If God must display his goodness in order to display his glory; then by seeking his own glory, he must necessarily seek the good of his creatures. A full display of divine goodness must necessarily promote the highest happiness of the intellectual system. God cannot, therefore, display all his goodness, without aiming to diffuse the largest possible portion of holiness and happiness, through the universe; or in other words, he cannot seek his own glory in the highest degree, without seeking the highest good of the intelligent creation. The Scriptures abundantly teach us, that God aims at his own glory in all



his conduct. We read, that "he made all things for himself; and that for his pleasure they are and were created." In dispensing mercies and judgments, he tells us, he means to display his glory before the eyes of all his intelligent creatures. But, in every instance of displaying his glory, he displays his goodness, and promotes the happiness of the universe. In creating angels and men, and all inferior objects, his ultimate design was to make them instruments in his hand, of promoting the holiness and happiness of the universe. For if there be one creature in the universe, whose creation, destination, and final disposal will not display the *goodness* of God, it cannot subserve his glory. Just so far, therefore, as all created objects will eventually promote the general good of the universe, just so far and no farther will they promote the glory of their Creator. The supreme glory of God, and the supreme good of the universe, are necessarily and inseparably connected. And it is for want of seeing this connexion, that so many object against the ultimate end of God in the creation of the world. They imagine it is derogatory to God to say, that he makes his own glory his ultimate end in creation, providence, and redemption. They attach the idea of selfishness to this motive of action. But if God cannot seek his own glory in any other way, than in displaying his goodness; then to seek his own glory to the highest degree, is the same thing as to give the highest expression of universal and disinterested benevolence.

3. If God cannot display all his glory, without displaying all his goodness; then the glory of God required the existence of natural and moral evil. All the goodness of God in all its branches, could not have been displayed, if natural and moral evil had not ex-

isted. If there had been no sinners among the creatures of God, he could never have had an opportunity of displaying his grace in forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; nor of displaying his justice in punishing the guilty and impenitent. There was the same kind, if not the same degree of necessity in the divine mind, to create sinful, as to create holy beings. If God meant to display all his goodness in creation, he was obliged to bring into being objects, upon which he might display both his justice and mercy. God's goodness will shine brighter, in his conduct towards sinful, than in his conduct towards holy beings. More of the heart of God will be seen in the work of redemption, than in all his other works. In this scheme of grace, a foundation is laid for a full discovery of all the natural and moral perfections of the Deity. The glory of God, therefore, required, that just such sinful creatures as mankind are should exist, that they might be both the monuments of divine justice, and of divine grace.

4. If the supreme glory of God consists in his goodness; then those, who like any part of his character, must necessarily like the whole. His natural perfections are under the entire control of his moral; and his moral perfections summarily consist in goodness, or universal, disinterested benevolence. His power is a benevolent power; his wisdom is a benevolent wisdom; his sovereignty is a benevolent sovereignty; his justice is a benevolent justice; and every other moral perfection of his nature is only a branch of general benevolence. No man, therefore, can understandingly approve of any one of the divine attributes, without approving of all. It is a great mistake in any to imagine, that they love the goodness, or mercy of God, while they feel opposed to his justice or sovereignty,

or any other divine attribute. The character of God is absolutely perfect and uniform. The characters of men are mixed characters, in which there are often some things to be liked, and others to be disliked. But in the Deity perfect goodness stamps a beauty and glory upon all his attributes, and forms a character completely and infinitely amiable. The only reason, why any imagine, that they love some parts of the divine character, and not the whole, is, that they do not really understand the nature of divine goodness; but suppose, that God is altogether such an One as themselves. They love the goodness of God, when they consider it as partial in their favor; but this is a false idea of it, and entirely consistent with hatred to his justice, and every other divine attribute.

5. If the supreme glory of God consists in his goodness; then those, who dislike any part of the divine character, must necessarily dislike the whole. Some pretend to like the natural perfections of the Deity, while they object against his moral attributes. Those of a Deistical turn profess to believe, that there is one Supreme Being, who is possessed of almighty power, boundless knowledge, and every other natural perfection. And they insinuate, that they have no objections against the existence and character of such a self-existent and eternal Being. Nor do mankind in general find fault with the natural attributes of the Deity, while they view them as disconnected with his moral character. The reason is obvious. The bare existence of the natural perfections of God, while they lie dormant, and are not voluntarily directed to any particular end, nor employed to promote any particular design, cannot in the least degree affect the interest or happiness of mankind. And the worst of men are willing there should be a being of infinite natural perfec-

tions, if he will let them entirely alone. But there is no room to consider the natural attributes of God as separate from his moral, for they are all under the influence of his goodness. And being under the constant direction of his goodness, they cannot be really approved of, without approving of his goodness. Those, therefore, who dislike the goodness of the Deity, which comprehends his whole moral character, must necessarily dislike every perfection of the divine nature. There are others among the believers of divine Revelation, who profess to like all the natural perfections of the Deity and some of his moral attributes, especially his goodness and grace; but yet heartily oppose his inflexible justice and absolute sovereignty. But if they dislike the justice and sovereignty of God, they must of necessity dislike his goodness and mercy, and every other natural and moral attribute. For the justice of God is only a branch of his perfect benevolence, and his sovereignty is a benevolent sovereignty. God does not dislike any of his own perfections; and those who are partakers of the divine nature, cannot dislike any of its natural and moral excellencies. It is not possible, that any man should really know all the perfections of the Deity, and yet hate one and love another. Those, who really hate any part of his goodness, must necessarily hate all his goodness; or all the perfections of his nature, which flow from it, and are always under the influence of it.

6. If the goodness of God forms his whole moral character; then those who do not love him supremely, must necessarily hate him supremely. There is no defect, nor blemish in the moral character of God. It is supremely amiable and glorious. In this light it appears to all holy beings. Angels and saints in heaven discern the moral glory and excellency of the Deity,

and accordingly love him supremely. They love the goodness of God which constitutes him the best of beings, and therefore they love him above all other beings. But, on the other hand, those who discern no moral excellence in the universal and disinterested benevolence of his nature, must necessarily discern an infinite blemish in his character, and view him as the most odious and detestable being in the universe. This we know is the case with respect to fallen angels. They now hate God supremely for that same goodness and moral glory, for which they once loved him supremely. And we find this to be the case with respect to sinners of mankind. When they are brought to realize the Being, and to attend to the moral character of God, they feel their carnal mind rise in perfect enmity and opposition to him. They view all his natural perfections under the influence of impartial and universal goodness. This they hate in any being, and above all in the Supreme Being. While they consider all his perfections under the influence of his perfectly benevolent heart, they hate his power, his wisdom, his justice, his sovereignty, his grace and faithfulness. They hate God in exact proportion to his goodness and greatness. And as they believe him to be infinitely great and good, so they hate him infinitely more than any other, yea, than all other beings.

7. Does the glory of God consist in his goodness, or in his feeling properly towards all his creatures, of every character and condition? Hence we learn that it is the *true character* of God, which sinners hate. They do not hate him, while they imagine he is regardless of their character and conduct. And they do not hate him while they think he is altogether such an One as themselves, and feels a partial regard for their interest and happiness. But as soon as they real-

ize that he loathes their characters, and feels disposed to punish them to all eternity, for all their selfish feelings and conduct, then they begin to hate him with a perfect hatred. There is nothing in God, which they so heartily oppose, as that very goodness or benevolence, which constitutes all his moral excellence and glory. They would not hate him so much, if they could only believe, that he was opposed to them upon the principle of perfect malevolence. There are no two dispositions so diametrically opposite to each other, as perfect benevolence and perfect selfishness. The first forms the character of God, and the second the character of sinners. Hence sinners perfectly hate that amiable and glorious disposition in the Deity, by which he is perfectly opposed to all their views and feelings. And the more they see the impartial, disinterested, sovereign goodness of his nature displayed in his works and in his word, the more directly and vigorously their hearts rise against him. Many suppose that all the opposition, which sinners feel and express towards God, arises entirely from ignorance of his true character; and, therefore, they conclude if sinners could only be made acquainted with God's true character, and his real feelings towards them, they would instantly renounce their enmity, and become his most cordial friends. But this is a very great mistake. It is the very nature of sinful creatures to hate their benevolent Creator. They would not be sinners unless they possessed a selfish heart; and so long as they possess this, they cannot be reconciled to the character, nor subject to the holy and righteous law of God. Besides; if a clear and just view of the character of God would reconcile sinners to him in this world, why not in the next? All the damned will have a clear, realizing, just view of the moral character of

God, but we have no reason to think, that their knowledge of his character and conduct will ever subdue their enmity, and reconcile them to his vindictive justice. But if the true knowledge of God will not have this effect in a future state, then it cannot have this effect in the present state. Indeed, it is the highest absurdity to suppose, that the clear knowledge of that being, whom sinners naturally hate, should lead them to love him. But it is easy to see, that the more selfish creatures know of the benevolence of the Deity, the more they will hate and oppose him.

8. If the glory of God consists in his goodness; then a clear view of his goodness would destroy all the false hopes of sinners, respecting their good estate. It is evident from Scripture, that sinners may think they have true love to God, and stand entitled to eternal life, while they are really in a state of total alienation from God. The Israelites entertained false hopes respecting the favor of God, when they received the law at Mount Sinai. The Scribes and Pharisees thought they stood high in the favor of God. The young man in the gospel, and Saul the persecutor, viewed themselves as really religious and friendly to God. And Christ represents many as being fatally and finally deceived, respecting their good estate. Such deception always arises from sinners having a false idea of the true character and supreme glory of God. Did they understand the true nature of his goodness, which forms his supreme glory, they would not imagine they loved him, while they were real enemies to him. They would be so far from thinking they loved him supremely, that they would sensibly feel a total opposition to his character. But when sinners have only a partial view of God's goodness they may love it, and feel strong affections of gratitude to the

greatest and best of beings. This is the case with respect to a very great part of those, who live under the light of the gospel; they have formed such an idea of divine goodness, that they really feel friendly to the divine character. And this is more particularly the case with those, who have been awakened to a sense of danger and guilt, and by some text of Scripture, or by some other circumstance, have been led to believe, that their sins are pardoned, and their persons accepted through Christ the beloved. But all these religious hopes and affections are false; and a clear view of all God's goodness, or of his goodness in all its branches, would totally destroy them. Let sinners only be convinced, that God's goodness is impartial, and leads him to hate and reject all those, who love him merely for a supposed partial affection towards them, and they would lose all their love and feel a bitter enmity against his whole character. This is demonstrated by the conduct of the Israelites, who sang God's praises at the Red Sea, but murmured, and rebelled, and died in the wilderness; and by those multitudes, who cried hosanna to Christ, but afterwards cried crucify him, and finally embued their hands in his blood. A just view of God's goodness must necessarily destroy all those religious affections, which flow from a false view of it.

9. If the glory of God consists in his goodness; then we learn, why sinners are represented as blind to his glory. The Scripture speaks much of the moral blindness of sinners, and represents them as incapable of seeing the moral beauty of the divine character. Our Savior frequently offended the Pharisees, by calling them blind. Paul says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them,



because they are spiritually discerned." The Apostle John says, "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love." Those who are entirely under the influence of a selfish heart, cannot know how an infinitely benevolent being feels. Though they may have a speculative knowledge of disinterested love, and discern an essential difference between selfishness and benevolence; yet they have no experimental knowledge of the supreme beauty and glory of the Deity. They must feel as he does, in order to have a moral view of his moral excellence

10. If God's glory essentially consists in his goodness; then those, who have seen his real glory in the least degree, will desire to see more and more of it. This appears from the nature of spiritual discoveries, which afford peculiar satisfaction to those, to whom they are made. Moses had seen the moral beauty of the divine character, and this led him to desire a more full and perfect discovery of it. "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." David had seen the glory of God, and his partial views of it led him to desire larger and clearer views of his moral beauty. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, *to behold the beauty of the Lord.*" Those, who possess the least degree of grace, and have had the least view of the moral excellence of the Deity, heartily desire to see all the glory of God displayed, in all the manifestations of his goodness. They are not afraid of seeing his power, nor his wisdom, nor his sovereignty, nor his justice, nor his grace, too fully discovered, because they know that all his perfections are under the influence of that perfect benevolence, which they love. They are not afraid of looking into futurity, and sending their thoughts into the regions

of light, and the regions of darkness, for they know that wherever they shall see the hand, they shall see the heart of God; and it will be impossible to discover any part of his character, or any instance of his conduct, which will not display his goodness. Blessed are the pure in heart, who love to see God. Their desires shall be completely satisfied, when they arrive at the kingdom of glory; and with this hopeful prospect they may possess their souls in patience, as David did. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness."

Let all take occasion from what has been said, to inquire whether they sincerely love the glory of God. This is something very different from loving their own happiness, and loving God for promoting it. To love the glory of God, is to love all his goodness, and all the perfections of his nature, which are under the influence of it. It is to be pleased with every part of the divine character, and every instance of the divine conduct. God has displayed his goodness towards angels and men; both in a state of holiness, and in a state of sin. He has discovered his feelings towards holy and unholy creatures. He has manifested the highest complacency and delight in those, who love him; and the highest displeasure against his enemies. He has provided a heaven of holiness and happiness for the righteous, and a place of everlasting torment for the wicked. He is now forming vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath, upon whom to display all his goodness in all its branches to all eternity. Now, do you desire to see the glory of God displayed in all these ways and upon all these objects? Are you wishing for the accomplishment of all God's designs to display his glory? Can you enter into his views and feelings, in the plan of redemption, which is to unfold

spirit now prevails among Christians; yet they are far from being united in their sentiments about the personal character of their common Savior. Four different opinions, upon this subject, divided them into four different denominations. These are commonly called, for the sake of distinction, Socinians, Arians, Unitarians, and Trinitarians. The Socinians believe, that Christ was but a mere man, though favored with the gift of Inspiration. The Arians make him more than man, and suppose him to be possessed of every divine perfection, except self-existence and independence. The Unitarians view him as a super-angelic Nature intimately united with the one true God. The Trinitarians conceive him to be a proper man mysteriously united with the second Person in the Godhead. But notwithstanding this variety of opinions concerning Christ, yet all his professed followers agree, that he was possessed of perfect purity and moral rectitude. And since they agree in the belief of his undoubted veracity, they ought to agree, that his own declarations concerning himself should settle their long and unhappy dispute. His enemies say, in our text, that he professed to be God as well as man. "Because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." These words very naturally lead us to consider what Christ did say concerning his humanity and divinity; and the grounds, upon which he asserted both.

I. Let us consider what Christ said concerning his humanity.

He was born of a woman. He gradually increased in stature and knowledge, until he reached the years of manhood. He then appeared and conversed like other men. And when he had occasion to speak of himself, he used a peculiar phrase, which clearly and forcibly expressed his humanity. He commonly called

himself *the Son of man*. I will mention a number of instances. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the *Son of man* hath not where to lay his head. The *Son of man* came eating and drinking. Tell the vision to no man, until the *Son of man* be risen from the dead. The *Son of man* goeth as it is written of him; but wo unto that man by whom the *Son of man* is betrayed. The *Son of man* is come to seek and save that which is lost. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the *Son of man*, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whom do men say, that I the *Son of man*, am?" It is needless to transcribe all the passages in which Christ calls himself the *Son of man*, since he calls himself so, more than sixty times in the New Testament. By this phrase, he always meant to assert his humanity. And the Jews always understood it in this sense. For they charged him with blasphemy, because he professed to be a man, and yet made himself God. If they had mistaken his meaning, he must have certainly known it, and as certainly rectified their mistake. But it does not appear, that he ever intimated to any person, that he had been misunderstood in calling himself the *Son of man*. By this phrase, therefore, he must have intended to assert his true and proper humanity.

II. Let us consider what he said concerning his divinity.

Though he professed to be man, yet he made himself God; and said more about his *divine* than about his *human* nature. He said a great many things, by which he meant either directly or indirectly, to assert his divinity. Here it may be observed, in the first place, that he called himself the *Son of God*. "God so loved the world, that he gave *his only be-*

*gotten Son*, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not *his Son* into the world to condemn the world, but that the world, through him, might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the *only begotten Son of God*. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the *Son of God*. Dost thou believe on the *Son of God*? He answered and said, who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, *it is he that talketh with thee*. This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the *Son of God* might be glorified thereby." In all these passages, Christ means to assert his divinity, by calling himself the *Son of God*. And he means to convey the same idea of himself, by calling *God his Father*. "The Son of man shall come in the glory of *his Father*. Thinkest thou that I cannot pray to *my Father*, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels. If ye had known me, ye should have known *my Father* also. But now have they both seen and hated both me and *my Father*." I might go on quoting passages of this import; for Christ calls *God his Father*, more than fifty times in the four Evangelists. This mode of speaking was very offensive to the Jews, who understood him as asserting his divinity. Accordingly we read, "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he had not only broken the sabbath, but said also that *God was his Father*, making himself *equal with God*." Again,

Christ used another phrase, which carried the idea of his divinity. He used frequently to say, that *he was one with the Father*. "Neither pray I for these

alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they may be *one*, as thou Father art *in me*, and I *in thee*, that they also may be *one in us*: that the world may know that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be *one*, even *as we are one*." By this union with his Father, the Jews understood him to assert his divine nature. Hence we are told, when he said on a certain occasion, "I and my Father are *one*, then the Jews took up stones to stone him." Just after this, he said, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and believe that the Father is *in me*, and I *in him*." It is added, "Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand." Again,

Christ used an expression, which fairly implied his eternity, and consequently his divinity; and being taken in this sense, it highly displeased the Jews. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, *Before Abraham was, I am*. Then they took up stones to cast at him, but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by." Again,

Our Lord professed to be a divine Person, by claiming a divine authority to *forgive sins*. "And behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, *thy sins are forgiven thee*. And behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts, said, Wherefore think ye

evil in your hearts? For whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee? or to say, arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." Again,

It belongs to a divine Person to perform divine works; and such Christ professed to perform. He said, "*My Father* worketh hitherto, and *I* work." He said, "he had power to lay down his life, and power to take it again." He said, "he had power to raise the dead, or quicken whom he would." He wrought miracles in his own name, and by his own power. When he was requested to work a miracle, his usual reply was, *I will*, and then wrought the miracle desired. The prophets wrought miracles in the name of God, and the Apostles in the name of Christ. But Christ wrought miracles in his own name, which was a public and explicit profession of his divinity.

Moreover, many persons, who came to our Savior, paid him divine homage, for which he never rebuked them. "And behold there came a leper and *worshipped him*, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, saying, *I will*, be thou clean." We are told, "There came a certain ruler and *worshipped him*, saying, my daughter is even now dead: but comethou and lay thine hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose and followed him." When Christ had walked upon the sea, saved Peter from drowning, and came into the ship, "then they that were in the ship came and *worshipped him*." The women, who met him after his resurrection, as they were returning from the sepulchre, "came and held him by his feet, and *worshipped him*." The eleven disciples conducted in the same manner in Gal-

ilee, for "when they saw him, they *worshipped him.*" And when believing Thomas said unto him, My Lord and my God, Jesus approved and commended his faith and worship. In such various ways, and by such various forms of speech, our Savior made himself God. And to give his expressions their full force, it may be proper to observe,

In the first place, that they convinced the Jews, that he *meant* to assert his divinity. When he inquired why they went about to stone him, they replied, "For a good work we stone thee not: but for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." The Jews, who knew their own language, would never have charged Christ with blasphemy, unless he had used expressions concerning himself which properly conveyed the idea of divinity. But when they heard him say, that he was the *Son of God*; that *God was his Father*; that he and his Father were *one*; that *he did the works of his Father*; that he had power to *raise the dead*; that he had authority to *forgive sins*; and that it was the will of God, that all men should honor the *Son*, even as they honor the *Father*; it was extremely natural for them to believe, that he *meant* to make himself God as well as man, And this leads me to observe,

In the second place, that Christ never contradicted his professions of divinity, nor explained them in any sense different from that, in which they were understood. Though he was blamed, and even charged with blasphemy, for making himself God; yet he never denied that he was a divine person, nor that he had professed to be so. But if he had not been a divine person, and had never intended to convey this idea of himself, then it was highly incumbent upon him, to explain his meaning, and undeceive those, whom he



Priest said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou sayest it. Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the High Priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy: what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy, what think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death." Thus Christ professed to be a *divine Person* while he lived; and when he died, he sealed his testimony with his own blood. It is as certain, therefore, that he possessed divinity, as that he possessed the least degree of truth or moral sincerity.

It only remains to consider,

III. Upon what grounds Christ asserted both his humanity and divinity.

And here, in the first place, let us inquire upon what foundation he asserted his humanity. Was it simply because he was born of a woman, and had a body of human shape and size? This is what some suppose. But is this supposition credible? Does a mere human body, born of a woman, though destitute of a human soul, constitute a human person? Adam was a man, though he never was born. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are men, though their bodies have been long since separated from their souls. It is not to be supposed, therefore, that Christ would assert his humanity, upon the slender ground of being born of a woman, and having only a human body. A human soul without a human body might have constituted him a man. But a human body without a human soul, could not have given him the essence of humanity. This leads us to conclude, that he asserted his humanity, upon the just

foundation of having "a true body and a reasonable soul," united in the same manner, as the soul and body are united in other men. And if he had a human soul united with a human body, then he may be as properly denominated a man, as any of his progenitors, whose names are mentioned in the first chapter of Matthew.

Let us next consider the ground upon which he asserted his divinity.

He could not pretend to be a divine person, upon Socinian ground, which is that of Divine Inspiration. A divine person has no occasion of being divinely inspired. This the Socinians allow, and; therefore, do not consider Christ as a divine person, because he had the gift of inspiration; but place him upon a level with other inspired men.

Nor could he assert his divinity upon Arian ground; which is, that he possessed all divine excellencies, except self-existence and independence. For, however great the powers and capacities of a dependent being may be; yet he cannot possess a single attribute, which may be properly called divine. The Arians run into a plain absurdity, which the Socinians avoid. The Socinians deny, that any being is divine, who is destitute of self-existence and independence; but the Arians maintain, that a being may be divine, who wants both these incommunicable attributes of the Deity. They plead that Christ possessed divine power, wisdom, and goodness; though he was absolutely dependent, and derived his being and all his powers from the Supreme God and Father of all. But it is totally inconceivable, that a derived, dependent Nature, should really possess any of those divine perfections, which essentially belong to an underived, independent, self-existent Being. No communications from

God to Christ could make him a *divine person*. Nor could any intercourse with the Deity, however near and intimate, make him a Deity. So that no excellencies or perfections of his nature, short of self-existence and independence, could justify him in asserting his divinity.

Nor could he pretend to be a divine person, upon Unitarian ground; which is, that he was only a super-angelic Nature united with a human body, and sent by the one only true God, to perform the work of redemption. Upon this hypothesis he could assert neither his humanity, nor divinity; for he was neither a man, nor an angel, nor a Deity; but a being (*sui generis*) of a peculiar kind. Accordingly, the Unitarians do not pretend he was a Deity, or possessed of any truly divine attributes. And we cannot suppose, that he would assert his divinity, upon a ground which was not just, and which the Unitarians themselves suppose was not sufficient to support such an assertion.

There remains no other ground, therefore, upon which he could assert his divinity, but that of his being God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person. A personal union between his divine and human nature would properly constitute him a *divine person*. And it appears from his own expressions, that he did assert his divinity upon this ground. He says, John iii, 13, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven." Here he represents his own individual person as being both in heaven and on earth, at one and the same time. And upon the supposition of his human and divine natures being personally united, he might properly say this; but upon no other supposition. A prophet could not

say this in his nearest approaches to God. Paul could not say this, when he was caught up to the third heaven. An angel could not say this, either in heaven or on earth. Nor could Christ say this, unless his *human* nature were personally united with the *divine*. Any other union, however near and intimate, could not warrant him who was a man, to make himself God.

But here it may be inquired, what is meant by Christ's human nature's being personally united with his divine nature. It is easy to say what is not meant by it. It does not mean, that his human nature was made divine nature. Omnipotence could not transform his humanity into divinity; because that would be the same as to produce divinity, or create a Creator. But supposing his human nature could have been made divine nature; yet that would have prevented his being God and man in two natures, and but one person, which is what he professed to be.

Nor, on the other hand, does his human nature's being *personally* united with his divine nature, mean, that his divine nature was made human nature. For, there was the same impossibility of degrading his divinity into humanity, as of exalting his humanity into divinity. And could this have been done, it would have equally prevented his being what he professed to be, God and man in one person.

Nor does his human nature's being *personally* united with his divine nature, mean, that his two natures were mixt or blended together. For, it evidently appears from Scripture, that he *personally* possessed every divine perfection, and every human quality, except sin. He discovered, in the course of his life, human ignorance and divine knowledge; human wants

and divine fulness; human weakness and divine power; human dependence and divine independence.

But, if the personal union of the two natures in Christ does not mean, that his humanity became divinity; nor his divinity became humanity, nor that these were mixt or blended together; then the question still recurs, What is meant by Christ's being one person in two natures? I answer, the man Jesus, who had a true body and a reasonable soul, was united with the second Person in the Trinity, in such a manner, as laid a foundation for him to say, with propriety, that he was man; that he was God; and that he was both God and man; and as also laid a foundation, to ascribe what he did as God, and suffered as man, to one and the self-same person. If any should here ask, How could his two natures be thus *personally* united? We can only say, It is a mystery. And there is no avoiding a mystery with respect to Christ. His conception was a mystery. And if we admit the mystery of his conception, why should we hesitate to admit the mystery of the *personal* union between his two natures? If we only admit this, all Christ said concerning himself is easy and intelligible. "Being a man, he might with propriety, make himself God."

I shall now close the subject, with a few serious Remarks.

1. To deny the divinity of Christ, is virtually to impeach his moral character. He knew, that there was a great variety of opinions entertained of him. Many inquired at his own mouth, what manner of person he was. In several instances, he was pleased to answer them in terms sufficiently plain and unequivocal. And though they objected against his answers, as extremely impious; yet he never contradicted or softened them. In this manner, he treated the grand

question concerning his divinity for several years. At last, the subject became more serious. The Jews conspired against him, and arraigned him before their highest Ecclesiastical Court, where they accused him of blasphemy for making himself God. The High Priest, in order to come at the truth of the case, laid him under the solemnity of an oath, and commanded him to say in sincerity, whether he had ever professed to be a divine person. In that peculiar situation, while the oath of God was upon him, and death itself before him, he confirmed and repeated his pretensions to divinity, and appealed to the day of judgment to sanction his declarations. There is now no need of further evidence, that he solemnly professed to be a divine person; and therefore we cannot call his divinity in question without joining with the Jews, and impeaching his moral character. His declarations are recorded, and carry the same authority now, that they did when they were uttered, and when they confounded his opposers. It will not save the appearance of modesty to plead, that we do not mean to *contradict*, but only to *explain* his expressions. It is now too late to explain Christ's words upon this subject; because he has, in the most plain and solemn manner, explained them himself. Hence there is only this alternative before us, either to believe his divinity, or to deny his veracity. But to deny his veracity, upon this subject, is to blast his whole moral character, and to represent him in as odious a light, as ever the Jews did, when they called him a blasphemer, and said he was mad, and had a devil. To impeach the moral character of Christ is extremely criminal. For, it is not only blaspheming his name, but denying his religion. To say that Christ was a blasphemer, is to say that christianity is a falsehood. If there was no truth

in Christ, there is no truth in his religion. Hence it seriously concerns those, who deny the divinity of Christ, impeach his character, and subvert his gospel, to prepare to meet him when he shall come in the clouds of heaven, and settle the solemn dispute between them.

2. To deny the divinity of Christ, is virtually to set up human reason against divine revelation. The Bible so plainly represents Christ to be a divine person, that none would hesitate to believe his divinity, if they could only comprehend the mystery of his being God and man in two natures, and yet but one person. This was the stumbling-block to the Jews. They could not comprehend how Christ, being a man, could make himself God; or how he could say, when he was not fifty years old, "before Abraham was, I am." And this is the stumbling-block to those, who now deny the divinity of Christ. The mystery contained in this doctrine, leads them to explain away the plainest passages of Scripture in favor of it; and to bend all their force to prove, that the personal union between the two natures of Christ is a plain and palpable absurdity. A late Writer, when he is reminded, that the Apostles maintained the doctrine of Christ's divinity, scruples not to say, "As it is not pretended that there are any miracles adapted to prove that Christ made and supports the world, I do not see that we are under any obligation to believe it, merely because it was an opinion held by an Apostle." He adds, "It is not, certainly, from a few casual expressions, which so easily admit of other interpretations, and especially in Epistolary writings, that we can be authorized that such was the serious opinion of the Apostles. But if it had been their real opinion, it would not follow that it was true, unless the teaching of it should appear to be included in their general commission

with which, as I have shewn, it has no sort of connexion."

But is it safe for men to lean to their own understanding, in opposition to the plainest declarations of Scripture? Let experience speak. Some have made the trial upon this important subject; but greatly to their own disadvantage. For, their attempt to avoid the *seeming* inconsistency of Christ's divinity, has driven them into a number of most plain and palpable absurdities. By denying him to be God as well as man, they have been obliged to ascribe such things to his humanity, as properly and necessarily belong to his divinity. This will clearly appear in a variety of instances.

The Scripture represents Christ as existing from eternity: but this they are obliged partly to acknowledge and partly to deny; and so maintain, that he neither existed from eternity, nor yet had a *beginning* of existence; which is a plain absurdity. The Scripture represents Christ as *creating* the world, which belongs to him as God: but this they are obliged to ascribe to him as man; which is a plain absurdity. The Scripture represents Christ as governing the world, which belongs to him as God: but this they are obliged to ascribe to him as a man; which is a plain absurdity. The Scripture represents Christ as having power to raise the dead, at the general resurrection, which belongs to him as God: but this they are obliged to ascribe to him as man; which is a plain absurdity. The Scripture represents Christ as being able to judge the secrets of all hearts, at the last day, which belongs to him as God: but this they are obliged to ascribe to him as man; which is a plain absurdity. All these absurdities necessarily flow from denying the



divinity of Christ, and applying those things to him as man, which belong to him as God.

If it should be allowed, for once, that the doctrine of Christ's divinity is really absurd; yet it is by no means so plain and palpable an absurdity, as these which have been mentioned. For, it is much easier to conceive that humanity and divinity should be personally united in Christ, than to conceive that a mere dependent nature should ever *begin* to exist; or that such a dependent nature should be able to *create* the world; to *govern* the world, to *judge* the world, and *raise the dead*. We can clearly see, that a being below the Deity cannot perform such divine works; but we cannot clearly see, that humanity and divinity could not be *personally* united in the great Emmanuel. As soon as men set up their own reason against divine revelation, they break over a sacred enclosure, and take the liberty to reason themselves into one absurdity after another, until they insensibly fall into the gulf of skepticism. "Those, who will believe nothing, the *manner* and *causes* of which they cannot comprehend, must be in the way to believe nothing at all." To avoid this dangerous error, let us be content to give God his place, and to take our own. Let us be willing to allow, that "the weakness of God is stronger than men; and the foolishness of God is wiser than men."

It is natural to remark in the last place,

3. That the establishment of Christ's divinity establishes the beauty and consistency of his whole character and conduct. It is this, which demonstrates the rectitude of his moral character; and so renders him worthy of the respect and imitation of the Socinians themselves. It is this, which gives worth to his death; and so renders him a complete and all-sufficient Sa-

rior. It is this, which reconciles all the great things ascribed to him, by the Prophets and the Apostles. It is this, which renders him worthy of the humble homage and praises of all the hosts of heaven. It is this, which establishes the truth and importance of the gospel. It is this, which ratifies the truth of those great and precious promises, that remain to be fulfilled; and assures us, that religion shall have a long and universal reign. It is this, which affords permanent light and consolation to all good men, while passing through the dark and dreary journey of life. In a word, it is the Divinity of Christ, which spreads a lustre over the face of the world, and calls upon Zion to rejoice, that *her God reigneth*.

## SERMON VIII.

### ON CONSCIENCE.

ACTS xxiv, 16.

*And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.*

IT seems rather strange, that those, who have critically surveyed the powers and operations of their own minds, should entertain very different ideas of conscience. One tells us, that conscience is nothing else but *our own judgment* of the moral rectitude or pravity of our own actions. A second tells us, that conscience is properly no more than *reason itself*, considered as instructed in regard to the rule we ought to follow. A third tells us, that there is a *principle of reflection* in men by which they distinguish between, approve and disapprove their own actions. A fourth tells us, that conscience, or the moral sense, is a *cordial* as well as *intellectual* exercise. This diversity of opinions respecting conscience, has been the occasion of many disputes upon moral and religious subjects, and of many errors not only in theory but in practice. It may be of some service, therefore, to consider conscience in both a speculative and practical light. The Apostle speaks of it in both these views. He represents it as a distinct faculty of the mind, which he earnestly endeavored to keep always free from offence. "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." These words naturally lead us to consider,

I. What conscience is: And,

II. What we must do in order to keep it void of offence.

I. We are to consider what conscience is. This is a very difficult as well as important inquiry. But since we know, that conscience belongs to the mind, we must look within, and search for it there. Though the mind be immaterial and invisible, yet it consists of more than one faculty. A mental faculty properly means a mental power of receiving ideas and impressions, independently of the will. According to this definition, we shall discover a number of distinct faculties in the human mind. Perception is a power of receiving ideas, independently of the will. If we open our eyes in a clear day, we cannot help perceiving the visible objects around us, whether we wish to perceive them, or not. Perception, therefore, is a distinct faculty of the mind.

Reason is a power of receiving, comparing, and compounding ideas, independently of the will. If we hear a man assert, that two and two are equal to four, we cannot help perceiving the truth of the proposition, whether we wish to perceive it, or not. Or if we hear a man demonstrate the immortality of the soul, we cannot help drawing the conclusion, that we must exist in a future state, whether we wish to exist in a future state, or not. Reason, therefore, is a distinct faculty of the mind.

Memory is a power of retaining and recalling past ideas, independently of the will. If we hear what we have heard before, or see what we have seen before, we cannot help recollecting, that we have heard or seen such things, whether we wish to recollect them, or not. Memory, therefore, is a distinct faculty of the mind.

Conscience is likewise a power of receiving ideas and impressions, independently of the will. If we are credibly told, that one man has killed another from malice prepense, we cannot help perceiving the criminality of the murderer, whether we wish to perceive it, or not. Conscience, therefore, is a distinct faculty of the mind. But to make this more fully appear, I proceed to observe,

1. That conscience is seated in the *breast*.<sup>\*</sup> The pleasure, or pain, arising from any mental faculty, clearly determines the place where it resides and operates. We all know, that the operation of conscience more immediately and sensibly affects the *breast*. It is here we feel pleasure or pain, whenever we are approved or condemned, by conscience. But when we freely employ the powers of perception, reason, and memory, we find it is the *head* which is either *agreeably* or *disagreeably* affected. If it be safe, therefore, to follow the dictates of daily experience, in reasoning upon the mind; we may safely conclude, that the conscience, which is seated in the *breast*, and performs all its operations there, is entirely distinct from all the mental powers, which are seated in the *head*.

2. The conscience may be *impaired*, without *impairing* any other faculty of the mind. A man, who pursues evil courses and forms evil habits, will necessarily blunt the edge of conscience and weaken its moral discernment. But after he has thoroughly seared his conscience, he may still retain his reason, memory, and every other intellectual faculty, in their full force and activity. How often do the most loose and abandoned wretches, who have stifled and well nigh extir-

<sup>\*</sup>It is impossible, perhaps, to determine the *local* seat of the soul, or of any of its faculties, since spirit does not occupy space. By the seat of conscience, therefore, is meant its seat of *influence*.

guished conscience, appear to reason as well, and to write as well upon any abstruse subject, as those of the most exemplary virtue and piety? This clearly proves that conscience may be *impaired*, without *impairing* any other intellectual faculty. But how can this be accounted for, without supposing conscience to be entirely distinct from every other mental power? If conscience were perception, then nothing could impair it but what impaired perception. Or if conscience were reason; then nothing could impair it but what impaired reason. It is a well known fact, that any *distinct* faculty of the mind may be *distinctly* impaired. Old age often impairs the memory, without impairing reason. A delirium often impairs reason, without impairing the memory. And blindness, or deafness, often impairs the perception, without impairing any other mental faculty. If these facts prove, that either perception, reason, or memory, is a distinct faculty of the mind; then they equally prove, that conscience is so. For it clearly appears, from observation and experience, that conscience, like every other distinct faculty of the soul, may be *distinctly* and *separately* *impaired*.

8. There is often a propriety in appealing from reason to conscience; which is another evidence, that these are really distinct faculties. In reasoning upon things of a moral nature, it is proper and necessary, in many cases, to appeal from the deductions of reason to the dictates of conscience. Those, who are addicted to any particular vice, often endeavor to justify their conduct, and reason very plausibly in their own defence. But if they would fairly appeal from reason to conscience, conscience would immediately condemn both their false reasoning and criminal practice. If we hear a loose and subtle man reason very ingenious-

ly against the truth of the Scriptures; we may with great propriety, desire him to consult his conscience upon this serious subject. And if his conscience be not extremely stupid, it will immediately tell him, that his arguments are false, and the scriptures are true. Or suppose two persons should dispute upon the practice of trading in the souls of men, and one should endeavor to prove it to be right, upon the principles of reason; and the other, instead of offering a single argument, against it, should only appeal to conscience; would not conscience, in opposition to a thousand rational arguments, clearly decide in this case, and condemn this inhuman practice? Now, if conscience may justly claim a right to correct the errors of reason, as well as the errors of the heart; then it must be a distinct and superior faculty of the mind. And this is what all mankind allow to be true, by their common practice of appealing from the court of reason to the court of conscience, upon any moral, or religious subject. I may further observe,

4. Conscience appears to be a distinct faculty, from its performing various offices, which no other intellectual faculty can perform. Here let us take a particular view of the various and peculiar offices of conscience. And,

First. It is the proper office of conscience to teach us the *moral* difference between virtue and vice. We are all capable of discerning the moral and immutable distinction between right and wrong, in the actions of moral agents. But if we examine our mental faculties, we shall find none but conscience, which can enable us to discover the moral quality of moral actions.

We certainly cannot discover right and wrong, by our Memory, which is only a faculty of recalling past ideas and impressions.

By Perception, we discover nothing but *natural* objects, and their *natural* effects. This power is common to all sensitive natures. Brutes perceive the objects around them, and their natural tendency to do them good or hurt. They perceive the natural tendency of fire and water, and take peculiar care to avoid being burned by the one, or drowned by the other. But they have no idea of right and wrong, or of virtue and vice. And bare perception in men serves no higher purpose than in brutes. If we possessed no mental faculty superior to perception, we could never discover the distinction between moral good and evil; nor perform a single action, which deserved either praise or blame.

If we now examine the power of Reason, we shall find it equally destitute of moral discernment. It cannot discover the least merit, or demerit in the conduct of moral agents. It can only measure the advantage or disadvantage, the *natural* good or evil, arising from their actions. If a man should spread a false report concerning a certain merchant, and that report should ruin the merchant's interest; reason could exactly calculate the damages done to the merchant, but it could not discover the criminality and ill desert of the liar. In the view of reason, a sufficient sum of money would completely repair the damages, and settle the whole affair. But in the view of conscience, which discerns the *moral quality* of actions, all the gold of Ophir could not take away the *sin*, or *moral evil* of lying. Hence it appears, that conscience performs a part, which no other faculty of the mind can perform.

Secondly. It is the proper office of conscience to give us a sense of *moral* obligation. We all feel that we *ought* to do some things, and *ought not* to do others. Our reason, however, knows nothing about *ought* and



*ought not*, and can give us no sense of *moral obligation*. It is only our conscience, which tells us what is right and what is wrong; and, at the same time makes us *feel*, that we *ought* to do what is right, and *ought not* to do what is wrong. Reason can discover the advantage of virtue, and the disadvantage of vice; but it is conscience only, which can make us feel our *moral obligation*, to pursue the former, and to avoid the latter. Thus, for instance, reason tells us, that *eternal happiness* is infinitely more valuable than *temporal enjoyments*, and therefore it will really be for our *interest*, to give up *temporal enjoyments*, for the sake of securing *eternal happiness*: but it is the part of conscience to make us feel, that we *ought*, or that it is our indispensable *duty*, to renounce the whole world, rather than to lose our own souls.

Thirdly. It is the proper office of conscience, to *approve* men for what is right, and to *condemn* them for what is wrong, in all their moral conduct. The Apostle represents conscience as doing this office in the breasts of the Gentiles. "These, having not the law, are a law to themselves; which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their *conscience* also bearing them witness, and their thoughts the mean while *accusing* or else *excusing* one another." A man's reason may teach him, that he has acted wisely in doing good, or that he has acted foolishly in doing evil; but it is his conscience only, which claims a right to call him to an account, and either *approve* or *condemn* him, according to the motives from which he has acted.

Fourthly. It is the proper office of conscience to make men feel that they *deserve* to be rewarded, or punished, according to their works. All mankind are capable of feeling their just *deserts*, though they are

often unwilling to receive the due reward of their deeds. We have a remarkable instance of this, in the case of Joseph's brethren, while they were suffering for their envy and cruelty, under the correcting hand of God. "And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us; and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us." Reason had suffered them to live year after year in carnal ease and stupidity; but when conscience awoke, it gave them a lively sense of guilt, and made them feel, that they justly *deserved* the severest tokens of the divine displeasure. Thus it appears from the proper offices of conscience, and from various other considerations, that it is a peculiar and distinct faculty of the mind. The way is now prepared to show,

II. What we must do in order to keep a clear and inoffensive conscience.

The Apostle tells us, that "he exercised himself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." The connexion of these words, and the occasion upon which they were spoken, may help us to discover their real import. Paul was making his defence before Felix. And, after a few introductory remarks, he freely owns, that he had embraced that religion, which his adversaries called heresy. But yet he pleads, that he had acted an honest and upright part, in adopting the peculiar doctrines of the gospel. And to confirm his declaration, he assures the governor, that he had made it his practice to follow the dictates of conscience, in the general course of his conduct, respecting both God and man. In this connexion, therefore, he must mean by a conscience void of offence, a conscience free from reproach or remorse. And such a conscience may be maintained.

For our conscience can never reproach us, so long as we faithfully obey its dictates. But the serious and practical question now is, what we must do, to maintain the peace and approbation of conscience. This, the Apostle intimates, requires great exertion. "Herein do *I exercise myself* to have always a conscience void of offence."

All the faculties of the mind are in some measure under the influence of the will. Though they are all distinct from the will; yet it depends upon the will, whether they shall be freely and properly exercised. We have the power of perceiving external objects; but it depends upon the will, whether we shall open or shut our eyes upon them. We have the power of reasoning upon various subjects; but it depends upon the will, whether we shall improve or neglect to improve this noble faculty. So, we have the power of discerning our duty, and the obligations we are under to do it; but it depends upon the will whether we shall exercise, or stifle our moral discernment. All the natural faculties are talents, which the will can either use or abuse. Hence our own free and voluntary exertions are necessary, in order to maintain a conscience void of offence. We may, if we please, always have a pure and peaceable conscience; but in order to reach such a high and happy attainment, we must always exercise ourselves, in the following respects.

1. We must give conscience full *liberty* to judge, *before* we act. It always stands ready to judge, and to judge infallibly right. It belongs to its office to *inform* us what we *ought*, and what we *ought not* to do. And if we would only allow it to do its office, *before* we act, it would never reproach us *after* we have acted. But if we either neglect, or refuse to

consult conscience upon what we are going to do and presume to act before we have obtained its approbation, it will certainly, sooner or later, condemn us for our rash and unwarrantable proceedings. Conscience claims a right of judging and dictating in all our moral conduct; and it is our indispensable duty in all cases, to give it *full liberty* of exercising this just and sacred right.

2. We must give conscience not only a *full liberty*, but also a *fair opportunity*, of judging *before* we act. Conscience always judges according to evidence; and if the evidence be false or partial, it will necessarily bring in a wrong verdict. We should be impartial in consulting conscience, and lay all the evidence of the case before it, that it may give a full and final decision. For, though we may impose upon conscience, for a time, by false or partial evidence; yet, it will finally discover the imposition, and condemn us for our folly and guilt. A person may have the approbation of conscience while he is acting, and yet afterwards feel self-condemned for what he has done. And this will always be the case, if we allow a corrupt heart to blind the conscience, by false, or partial evidence. Here lies the necessity of peculiar exertion, in order to have always a conscience void of offence. Though every instance of duty be really a case of conscience; yet there are some more doubtful and difficult duties, which are more commonly and more emphatically called cases of conscience. And it is in these cases more especially, that we ought to collect, compare, and weigh evidence, in order to give conscience a *fair opportunity* of judging. In a thousand plain cases, it decides in a moment what is right or wrong; but in doubtful, difficult, and important cases, it never gives a full and final decision, until all the

evidence has been collected and exhibited. Hence, therefore, we ought to exercise ourselves, that conscience may have a *fair opportunity* of judging *before* we act.

3. We must *cordially* obey the dictates of conscience, *while we are acting*. The dictates of conscience must be obeyed from the *heart*, as well as the divine commands. Men may, indeed, deceive themselves, and imagine they have acted conscientiously, when they have paid a mere *external* obedience to the dictates of conscience. But whenever conscience comes to review their conduct, it will condemn them for their *undutiful* spirit. Conscience tells every man, that all real obedience, or disobedience lies in the heart; and that he is either praise, or blame worthy, according to the motives which govern his conduct. We can never, therefore, satisfy the demands of conscience, unless we act agreeably to its dictates from an *upright heart*. But as long as we *properly* consult, and *cordially* obey the dictates of conscience, it will *approve* our conduct, and afford us that inward peace, which is the very balm of life. And this may well animate us to exercise ourselves, to have always a conscience void of offence. But since there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not; it is necessary to add,

4. That we ought to let conscience do its office, *after* we have acted, as well as *before*. Conscience will be regarded sooner or later. If we neglect to consult, or to obey it, before we act, or while we are acting, it will claim a right to review our conduct, and to condemn us for it. And since we are all liable to disregard and stifle conscience, while we are pursuing the concerns of life; we ought to give it a full liberty and a fair opportunity, of reviewing our past actions,

and of bringing in a true and faithful, though a disagreeable verdict. Self-examination is highly proper and necessary for such depraved and imperfect creatures as we are. And we cannot maintain a conscience void of offence, without frequently exercising ourselves in this serious and important duty. A number of instructive and useful inferences may now be fairly drawn, from what has been said in this discourse.

1: It appears from the description, which has been given of the nature and offices of conscience, that it is a superior faculty of mind, and absolutely necessary in order to constitute us *moral* agents. There is an essential difference between agents and *moral* agents; and it is conscience, which forms this difference between men and animals. All the lower species are agents: They act under the influence of motives. They choose and refuse, in the view of external objects. One species chooses to live in the water, and another chooses to live on the land. One species chooses to live in a warm climate, and another in a cold. One species chooses to feed on fruits, another on fish, and another on fowls. But though these and all other species of animals act voluntarily in the view of motives; yet they are not *moral* agents, because they can neither distinguish between right and wrong, nor feel any *moral* obligation either to act, or to refrain from acting. And were men destitute of conscience, they would be equally incapable of feeling *moral* obligation, and of distinguishing the *moral* quality of actions: Neither perception, nor reason, could give them this *moral* discernment. It is conscience, therefore, which constitutes them *moral* agents, and raises them to the rank of accountable beings.

2. If it be true, that conscience is a distinct faculty of the soul and necessarily constitutes a *moral agent*; then it is very natural to conclude, that infants are *moral agents* as soon as they are agents. Though they are born weak and helpless creatures; yet they very early discover not only motion, but action. When they are but a few days old, they appear to act voluntarily in the view of motives. They are pleased with some objects, and displeased with others. They never fail, for instance, to prefer light to darkness, and sweet to bitter. By such instances of choosing and refusing, they appear to be *agents*, or to act voluntarily in the view of motives. But we cannot suppose, that they are *mere agents*, in these *free, spontaneous, voluntary exertions*. For if they were *mere agents*, they would not be men in miniature, nor be capable of becoming *moral agents*. *Mere agents* are utterly incapable of becoming *moral agents*. This has been demonstrated, by all the experiments, which have been made upon tamed animals. Though they have been taught to do many curious things, and to imitate a thousand human actions; yet they never have been taught to *distinguish* virtue from vice, nor to feel the force of *moral obligation*. They are by nature *mere agents*; and, without a new nature, they cannot be made, nor become *moral agents*. And if infants were, at first, *mere agents*, they could never be made, nor become *moral agents*. Neither experience, nor observation, nor instruction, could give them the *faculty* of moral discernment. We may use many means to strengthen and refine the mental powers of infants and children; but there are no means to be used, to give them any new intellectual faculty. If conscience, therefore, be an essential faculty of the human mind, it must belong to it in infancy. And if infants pos-

ness this faculty of *moral* discernment, then they must of necessity commence *moral* agents, as soon as they commence agents. There seems to be no way to avoid this conclusion, but to suppose, that conscience cannot be exercised *so early*, as the other faculties of the mind. But how does it appear, that conscience cannot be exercised *as early*, as any other intellectual faculty? It does not appear from experience. For every person knows, that he has been able to distinguish right from wrong, and to feel a sense of guilt, ever since he can remember. It does not appear from observation. For infants discover plain marks of moral depravity, and appear to act *wrong*, as soon as they *begin* to act. And it does not appear from Scripture. For the Bible represents infants as sinful, guilty creatures as soon as they are born; which plainly implies, that they are moral agents. In a word, Scripture, reason, observation, and experience, are all in favor of the moral agency of infants. And if we do not admit, that moral agency commences in infancy, it is impossible to determine, or even to form a probable conjecture, when it does commence.

3. If conscience be the only faculty of the mind, which gives us a sense of moral obligation; then its dictates are always to be followed. Though all allow that we ought to follow the dictates of conscience, when it is rightly informed; yet some suppose we ought not to follow its dictates when it is misinformed and erroneous. As this is a question concerning duty, so we are obliged to defer it to the decision of conscience. But if we refer it to conscience, it will instantaneously determine, that we ought always to follow its dictates. Conscience never fails to lay us under moral obligation to regard its precepts and prohibitions, If it tells us, that a certain mode of conduct



of their conduct, it would condemn every thing they do as altogether criminal and displeasing to God. It is, therefore, wholly owing to the *partial* manner of their consulting conscience, that they vainly imagine they are doing God service, while they are living in the habitual commission of sin. This great and dangerous delusion Solomon describes as a solemn warning to all those, who are walking in a serious and conscientious road to destruction. "Every way of man, says he, is *right* in his *own eyes*: but the Lord pondereth the *hearts*." And again he says, "There is a way that *seemeth right* to a man, but the end thereof are the *ways of death*."

5. If conscience be entirely distinct from the heart and every other power of the mind; then sinners grow worse instead of better, under the strivings of the Spirit. The Spirit of God, in striving with sinners, only sets their natural faculties in motion, and awakens conscience to do its office. But while the conscience convinces sinners of their guilt and danger, their hearts naturally rise in direct and sensible opposition to God. This was the experience of Paul, under the convictions of conscience, according to his own account. "I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin taking *occasion* by the *commandment*, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment *came*, sin *revived*, and I died." While Paul was under the strivings of the Spirit, he not only saw his *past* sinfulness; but found that his corrupt heart took occasion from the light and conviction of conscience, to rise into higher and more sensible opposition to God. Sin *revived*, and he died. Nor was this a singular

case. All sinners appear to themselves to sin faster under conviction, than they ever did in a state of spiritual ignorance and stupidity. And this appearance is no vain delusion, but a most alarming reality. For the light and conviction of conscience, instead of restraining and softening their hearts, only serve to draw forth their corruptions, and aggravate their guilt. And though an increasing sense of danger and guilt, makes them earnestly seek to please God, by every outward act of duty and devotion; yet their hearts continually wax worse and worse, until they are effectually subdued, by special grace.

6. If conscience be a distinct and essential faculty of the mind; then no sinner is beyond the reach of conviction. Some sinners appear to be entirely stupid, and seem to bid defiance to the arrows of conviction. But though they have stifled, yet they have not destroyed conscience. They still carry that faithful witness in their breast, which is able to discover all their guilt, and to destroy all their peace. God can easily awaken their conscience to do its office; and whenever he does command his vicegerent to speak in his name, they will find themselves to be in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. All sinners, therefore, are equally liable to conviction. Those, who sin in secret, where they imagine no eye can see them, are constantly exposed to the reproach and condemnation of conscience, which alone is instead of a thousand witnesses. Those, who deny the divinity of the Scriptures, the existence of the Deity, and even the moral and immutable distinction between virtue and vice, cannot always maintain their criminal stupidity; but must sooner or later find themselves to be men, and feel the remorse of a guilty conscience. And those,

who stifle and impose upon conscience, by the outward appearances of virtue and religion, may be thoroughly convinced of their real hypocrisy and total corruption of heart. Though sinners of this class seem to be the most out of the reach of conviction; yet they have sometimes been awakened to see their delusion, and to realize their danger and guilt. Here Paul naturally occurs, as a remarkable instance. For a long time, he deceived and pacified conscience, by the purity of his life. For, as touching the righteousness of the law, he was entirely blameless. But when the commandment came, sin revived, and he died. His awakened conscience condemned him, not only for his injurious conduct towards Jesus of Nazareth and his faithful followers; but for all his shining virtues and self-righteousness, which had well nigh proved his ruin. His conviction was extremely sudden, unexpected, and pungent. From the highest of false zeal and self-confidence, it threw him helpless and hopeless at the foot of divine sovereignty. This is a solemn warning to all sinners, and more especially to self-righteous sinners, not to deceive and impose upon conscience. For the longer they resist and stifle its motions, the more power they will give it, to disturb their peace, destroy their hopes, and fill their souls with insupportable anguish and distress.

7. If it be the proper office of conscience to reprove all evil exercises and sinful actions; then it is impossible that sinners should live an easy and quiet life. As they never have a conscience void of offence, so they never have a solid foundation for inward peace and serenity of mind. Though they are surrounded with the blessings of providence, and enjoy the esteem and applause of fallible men; yet they are continually subject to inward reproach and self-condemnation. Their

heart and conscience are always at variance. And though they endeavor to stifle the voice of conscience, yet it often assumes its sovereign right, to accuse and condemn them, in spite of their hearts. Hence they live, a most unhappy and restless life. They travel with pain all their days. A dreadful sound is in their ears. A fire not blown consumeth them. In the midst of laughter, their hearts are sorrowful. Yea, there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. They are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

8. If conscience will always approve of a sincere and upright heart; then those who live a virtuous and holy life, must necessarily be happy. Accordingly we read, "A good man shall be satisfied from himself." And again, "The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Those who live in the practice of virtue and religion, have a conscience void of offence, which yields them that peace, which the world cannot give, and which the world cannot take away. Though the Apostles and primitive christians were generally despised and opposed; yet they found a perpetual source of comfort and joy in the peace and approbation of their own conscience. And if we only live the same holy and devout life which they lived, we may also humbly and confidently say as they said: "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have our conversation in the world." Amen.

## SERMON IX.

### MAN'S ACTIVITY AND DEPENDENCE ILLUSTRATED AND RECONCILED.

PHILIPPIANS ii, 12, 13.

*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

THOUGH a perfect harmony runs through all the doctrines of the gospel; yet to discover and point out this harmony, is, in many cases, a very arduous task to perform. It is extremely difficult to reconcile many truths with each other, which, separately and independently considered, are plain and obvious to every person. To escape this difficulty the preachers of the gospel too often treat some of the most important articles of christianity in a manner totally disjointed and unconnected. When they consider the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, they slide over the duty of universal obedience to the divine commands. When they treat of the renovation of the heart, they decline inculcating the obligation of sinners to repent and believe the gospel. And when they handle the subject of divine agency upon the hearts of believers, they avoid urging the practice of those virtues and graces, which flow from the sanctifying influences of the divine Spirit. But the inspired Apostles adopt a different mode of instruction. They represent the doctrines of the gospel in their proper and intimate connexion; in order to place them in the most clear and advantageous light. This appears in the words I have read. "Work out your own salvation with fear

and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Here the Apostle lays before us, at one view, both *human activity* and *human dependence*, and represents them as perfectly harmonious and consistent. For he considers believers, to whom he is speaking, as being able to act in the most free and voluntary manner, while they are acted upon by the immediate power and energy of the divine Being. It is evident, therefore, that he intended to assert this general truth:

*That saints both act and are acted upon by a divine operation, in all their holy and virtuous exercises.*

It is the design of the ensuing discourse to make it appear, that this sentiment is plainly contained in the Word of God; and then to inquire, why it is supposed to be inconsistent and absurd.

The point proposed might be argued from the mere light of nature. It is the dictate of right reason, that no created being is capable of acting independently. Universal and absolute dependence goes into the very idea of a creature; because independence is an attribute of the divine nature, which even omnipotence cannot communicate. And since saints are creatures, and creatures too of an inferior order, they can never act otherwise, than under the powerful and unremitting energy of the Supreme Being. But not to insist on this argument, I proceed to adduce evidence from Scripture, that saints both act and are acted upon by a divine operation, in all their holy and virtuous exercises.

Paul tells us, "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." Solomon uses a similar mode of expression. "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord." The

Church expresses the same sentiment in her petition to Christ. "Draw me, we will run after thee." This idea is contained in that divine promise made to Christ: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." David says, "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." And agreeably to this he prays, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, *my strength*, and my redeemer." The Apostle, impressed with a sense of his absolute dependence, says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." And he introduces Aratus one of the Heathen Poets, who proclaims with the voice of nature, that "in God we live, and move, and have our being."

If we now take a particular view of the several graces and virtues, in the exercise of which saints work out their own salvation, we shall find that they always act under the powerful influence of the divine Spirit.

To begin with their first holy exercises, the Scripture represents them as acting and being acted upon, in their regeneration or conversion. This great change is mentioned under a variety of figures and modes of expression. It is called the circumcision of the heart, and as such ascribed both to God and the creature. On the creatures part, it is commanded as a duty. "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked." But as the act of God, it is promised as a blessing. "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." The making of a new heart is both enjoined as a duty and promised as a favor. The injunction is, "Cast away from you all

your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit." But the promise is, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean—a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and *cause* you to walk in my statutes." The spiritual resurrection is represented as the work of God and the duty of the sinner. The Apostle considers it as the work of God, when he tells believers, "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." But God commands the sinner to arise from spiritual death. "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest and rise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." The new creation is represented as the work of man as well as the work of God. In one place, the Apostle speaking in the name of christians, says, "We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works." But in another place, he enjoins this new creation as a duty. "Put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." The turning from sin unto God is sometimes represented as arising from a divine operation, and sometimes as owing to human exertion. As a divine operation David prays for it repeatedly in the eightieth Psalm. "Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved." Ephraim prays in the same language for himself. "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned." And the



prophet Jeremiah cries, "Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned." But God expressly requires sinners to return unto him, of their own accord. By Isaiah he says, "Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." And by Ezekiel he urges the same duty upon sinners. "Turn ye, turn ye: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

Love, the first and noblest of all the christian graces, is required as a duty, and yet placed among the gifts of the Spirit. David calls upon good men to love God. "O love the Lord all ye his saints." And he resolves to exercise the same affection. "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength." But the Apostle tells us, that love is of God, and the production of his Spirit. "Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." Repentance, another holy exercise, is represented as the gift of God and the act of the penitent. Timothy is directed, "in meekness to instruct those who oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth." Yet the Apostle tells us, "God now commandeth all men every where to repent." Christ declares, "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Notwithstanding this we are told, "Him hath God exalted to give repentance and remission of sins." Though faith in Christ be required, yet it is represented as the effect of a divine operation. When the Jews demanded of Christ, "What shall we do that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." But the Apostle

tells believers, "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." And suggests the same idea, by reminding them, that "they were risen with Christ, through the faith of the operation of God." Coming to Christ, which is indeed the same as believing in him, is represented as the exercise of the sinner, while under the influence of a divine operation. "No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." Thus saints are represented as actually loving, repenting, believing, and coming to Christ, under the agency of the divine Spirit.

And we must further observe, that they are represented as exercising not only these, but all other graces and virtues, in the same manner. It is said, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness." Nevertheless, we find these fruits of the Spirit required as christian duties. "Giving all diligence," says the Apostle Peter, "add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity." And the Apostle Paul gives a similar exhortation to christians. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." In a word, good men are represented as turning from sin unto God; as making themselves a new heart; as raising themselves from spiritual death; as exercising love, repentance, faith, submission, and every other christian grace; as persevering in holiness, enduring unto the end, and being faithful unto death: and yet they

are represented as doing all those things, by virtue of a divine influence upon their minds. God is represented as beginning the good work in them; as carrying it on until the day of Jesus Christ; and as keeping them by his mighty power through faith unto salvation. All this is fully comprised in the text. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Finally, the doctrine under consideration is confirmed, by all the commands in the Bible, and by the prayers of all good men. Every command, which God has given to men, plainly supposes, that they are moral agents, who are capable of acting freely in the view of motives; because a command could have no more influence, or lay no more obligation upon men, than upon stocks or stones, were men incapable of seeing the nature, and of acting under the power, of motives. As all the commands in the Bible, therefore, require men to put forth some motion, some exercise, some exertion either of body, or of mind, or of both; so they necessarily suppose, that men are, in the strictest sense of the word, moral agents, and capable of yielding active, voluntary, rational obedience to the will of God. But yet the prayers of all good men equally suppose, that they must be acted upon by a divine operation, in all their virtuous exercises and actions. For when they pray for themselves, that God would *give* them joy, peace, love, faith, submission, or strengthen and increase these and all other christian graces; their prayers presuppose the necessity of a divine operation upon their hearts, in all their gracious exercises and exertions. And when they pray for the world in general, that God would suppress vice and irreligion every where, convince and convert sinners,

comfort and edify saints, and spread the Redeemer's kingdom through the earth; their prayers are founded in the belief, that God must work in men both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Such clear and abundant evidence the Bible gives us, that saints both act and are acted upon by a divine operation, in all their holy and virtuous exercises.

But still we find many, who consider this scripture doctrine as a gross absurdity, or at least, as the Gordian knot in divinity, which, instead of untying, they violently cut asunder; and so make a sacrifice either of activity, or of dependence. Some give up activity for the sake of dependence; some give up dependence for the sake of activity; and some first give up one and then the other, for the sake of maintaining both. The Fatalists give up activity for the sake of dependence. They suppose men are totally dependent and constantly acted upon as mere machines; and of consequence are not free agents. The Arminians, on the other hand, give up dependence for the sake of activity. They suppose men have a self-determining power, or a power to originate their own volitions, and are capable of acting independently of any divine operation upon their hearts. But many of the Calvinists endeavor to steer a middle course between these two extremes, and first give up activity and then dependence, in order to maintain both. They hold, that men are *active* both before and after regeneration, but *passive* in regeneration itself. These three classes of men, however they may differ in other respects, seem to agree in this, that no man can act freely and virtuously, while he is acted upon by a divine operation; and accordingly unite in pronouncing the doctrine, which we have been laboring to establish, inconsistent and absurd. This naturally leads us to inquire,

In the second place, why activity and dependence are so generally supposed to be inconsistent with each other.

If saints do indeed work out their own salvation with fear and trembling under a divine operation, as has been perhaps sufficiently proved; then this doctrine cannot be supposed to be inconsistent and absurd, because it is so in its own nature. If it be true, it must be consistent, whether we can discover its consistency or not.

Nor, in the next place, can any suppose this doctrine is inconsistent and absurd, because it is more difficult to apprehend and explain, than many other doctrines of natural and revealed religion. Who can conceive or explain *how* the Supreme Being exists of himself? or *how* he supports the universe? or *how* he fills all places, and surveys all objects, at one and the same time? But who, except Atheists and skeptics, will presume to deny these truths, or venture to call them inconsistent and absurd? Why, then, should any suppose there is the least absurdity in men's working out their own salvation with fear and trembling, while God, at the same time, works in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure? It is as easy to conceive of this, as to conceive of the divine existence, omnipresence, or universal providence. In all cases of this nature, the facts are plain and intelligible, but the manner of their existence or production is truly mysterious. Our own existence is self-evident; but *how* we were formed is to us a profound mystery. Our constant dependence on the Deity for the continuation of existence, is capable of strict demonstration; but how God upholds us every moment, we are utterly unable to explain. So our dependence on the Deity to work in us both to will and to do, is equal-

ly demonstrable; but how God operates on our minds in our free and voluntary exercises, we are equally unable to comprehend. There is, therefore, no more mystery in this doctrine; than in every object we see, or every sound we hear, or every breath we draw. The subject before us, may be involved in more difficulties than some other subjects, which have been less examined and controverted; but there is a wide difference between *difficulties* and *mysteries*. Though we can never remove *mysteries*, yet we can sometimes remove *difficulties*. And when the difficulties are removed from a difficult subject, it then becomes plain and intelligible. Many points in Physic and Philosophy, which were once attended with great difficulties, are now become easy and familiar to the masters of those sciences. And nothing further is necessary to render the subject of man's dependence and activity level to every one's apprehension, than to remove the difficulties, with which it has been embarrassed, by the tongue and pen of controversy.

It may be proper to observe, once more, that none can suppose this doctrine to be inconsistent, because they have found it to be so, by their own experience. To believers we make the appeal. Did you ever feel the least inconsistency between activity and dependence? Did you ever perceive the divine agency to obstruct your own? Did you ever find your moral powers suspended in regeneration, in love to God, in repentance, in faith, or in any other holy affection? Were you ever conscious of being less able to grow in grace, and to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, because God wrought in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure? Should you all speak the language of your own experience upon this subject, we presume you would with one voice declare,

that the spirit of the Lord never destroyed, nor even obstructed, your liberty.

The question now returns, why is it so generally supposed, that man's activity and dependence are totally irreconcilable? I answer, this may be chiefly or wholly owing to the following reasons.

1. Some may suppose, that human dependence and activity cannot be reconciled, because they are unwilling to see the consistency of a doctrine, which throws them absolutely into the hands of God. The Apostle evidently suggests this idea, when he introduces a man disputing his dependence with his Maker. "Thou wilt then say unto me, why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?" Many choose to deny, that they are moral agents, rather than to own, that they are dependent agents, who are obliged to act under the controlling influence of the Supreme Being. They wish either to enjoy dependence without freedom, or freedom without dependence; and, therefore, they will not, if they can possibly help it, see that harmony between both, which places them in a situation so extremely interesting and hazardous.

2. Some may suppose, that dependence cannot be reconciled with activity, because they are *conscious* of being *active*, but not of being *dependent*. This is a strong hold, in which many intrench themselves, and feel entirely out of the reach of all arguments, in favor of a divine operation upon the hearts of moral agents. They appeal to common sense as an infallible proof, that men act freely and voluntarily, without feeling the least compulsion, or influence from the hand of God. It is undoubtedly true, that we are all *conscious*

of activity; and *intuitively know* that we are free moral agents. But to what does this dictate of common sense amount? Does it prove, that we are not dependent upon the Supreme Being for all our moral exercises? Most certainly it does not. For, supposing God does really work in us both to will and to do, we cannot be conscious of his agency, but only of our own, in willing and doing. Though in God we live, and move, and have our being; yet we are never conscious of his almighty hand, which upholds us in existence, every moment. It is, indeed, as impossible that we should *feel* the operation of God upon our hearts, while he works in us both to will and to do, as it was, that Adam should have *felt* the forming hand of God, in his creation. If Adam, therefore, could not have proved, from his experience, that he was self-existent; we cannot prove, from our experience, that we are independent, in all our free and voluntary exertions. Hence our *consciousness of moral freedom*, is no evidence against our absolute dependence upon God, for all the inward motions and exercises of our hearts.

3. Many, by reasoning unjustly on this subject, persuade themselves, that they cannot act, while they are acted upon. They reason from matter to mind, which is by no means conclusive. Since matter is incapable of acting, while it is acted upon, they conclude the mind must also be incapable of acting, while it is acted upon. They suppose, if we are as dependent upon God for all our voluntary exercises, as a clock or watch is dependent upon weights or springs for all its motions; then we are as incapable of moral agency, as these or any other mere machines. But the fallacy of this mode of reasoning may be easily exposed. The fallacy lies here. It takes for granted, that the only reason, why a clock, or a watch, or any other machine,



is not a moral agent, is simply because it is *acted upon*, or depends upon some power out of itself for all its motions. But is this true? Let us make the trial. Suppose a clock, which has hitherto been dependent, and moved by weights and wheels, should this moment become *independent*, and *move of itself*. Is this clock, now, any more a *moral agent*, than it was before? Are its motions, now, any more *moral exercises*, or any more worthy of praise or blame, than they were before? by no means. But why not? Because, notwithstanding it is, now, independent, and moves of itself; yet being still *matter* and not *mind*, it moves without perception, reason, conscience, and volition, which are attributes essential to a moral agent. The reason, why a clock, or watch, or any other machine is incapable of *moral agency*, is not because it is either *dependent*, or *independent*; but simply because it is senseless matter, and totally destitute of all the principles of *moral action*. As neither dependence nor independence can make a machine a mind; so neither dependence nor independence can make a mind a machine. It is impertinent, therefore, to reason from matter to mind, upon this subject. Our dependence on the Deity cannot deprive us of *moral freedom*, unless it deprives us of our *moral powers*. If God, while working in us both to will and to do, only leaves us in possession of understanding, conscience, and volition; then he leaves us in full possession of moral agency, which must necessarily continue, as long as these intellectual and moral powers remain. Indeed, there is nothing, in the whole circle of created objects, which affords any argument to prove, that man's dependence destroys his moral agency. There is no argument to be drawn from *material* objects to prove this; because they are entirely destitute of all *mental*!

properties. And there is no argument to be drawn from *intelligent* objects to prove this; because there is no species of intelligent creatures that we are acquainted with, who are less dependent on God for all their mental exercises, than we are. Hence it appears to be absolutely impossible for any to prove, that human dependence and activity are inconsistent with each other. But I must observe once more,

4. That some involve themselves in confusion, by reasoning *too far* upon this subject. They carry Reason out of its province, and employ it in deciding that, which it has no power nor authority to decide. Many complain, that they have often attempted to reconcile dependence with activity, but after all their efforts, have been obliged to give up the subject, as surpassing the reach of their comprehension. And to keep themselves in countenance, they bring in Mr. Locke, that oracle of reason, who ingeniously owns, that he could never reconcile prescience in the Deity with human liberty; or, in other words, man's dependence with moral freedom. This, however, will not appear strange, if we consider, that it belongs not to the office of Reason, to reconcile these two points. Though activity, and dependence are perfectly consistent, yet they are totally distinct; and of course fall under the notice of distinct faculties of the mind. Dependence falls under the cognizance of reason; but activity falls under the cognizance of common sense. It is the part of reason to demonstrate our dependence upon God, in whom we live, and move, and have our being. But it is the part of common sense to afford us an intuitive knowledge of our activity and moral freedom. We must, therefore, consult both reason and common sense, in order to discover the consistency between activity and dependence.

Nor is this a singular case. There are many other subjects, upon which we can form no proper judgment, without the united aid of reason and common sense. Should I observe to a person walking with me in a garden, that a certain flower is the product of divine power, and possesses a beautiful color; and should he call upon me to prove my assertions, I should be obliged to have recourse first to reason and then to common sense. I could prove, by reason, that the flower was the product of divine power; but as to its color, I could only refer him to the evidence of his own eyes. If I should see a servant destroy his master's property, I could prove to him by reason that he had injured his master; but I could not prove to him, by reason, that he had broken a moral obligation and committed a crime. I could only represent the nature and extent of the injury which he had done to his master, by this instance of his conduct, and then refer him to the dictates of his own conscience; and if he should still continue unconvinced of his criminality, it would be out of my power to give him conviction, by any arguments drawn from reason. You may read a fine poem, and your reason may discover the unity of design, the connexion of parts, and the regular construction of periods; but, if at the same time, you perceive the harmony of numbers, the sublimity of sentiments, and the beauty of characters, this is not owing to any peculiar intellectual acumen, but to a correct taste, or the finer feelings of human nature, well cultivated and improved. These instances clearly show, that reason and common sense have different offices, and are to be employed in discovering different truths. It is not very strange, therefore, that we are obliged to employ both reason and common sense, in order to reconcile activity and dependence. Nor is there any

ground to imagine, that their consistency with each other is *less certain*, because it cannot be discovered, by reason alone, nor common sense alone, but by the united assistance of both. For if we know by reason that we are *dependent*, and know by common sense that we are *active*; then we know, that both activity and dependence do, in fact, harmoniously meet and unite in our minds. And this mode of reconciling activity and dependence seems calculated to give entire satisfaction to any person, who is pressed with the difficulty of seeing their harmony and connexion. Let us apply it to the case of such a person. Does reason teach you, that you are a dependent creature? Does common sense teach you that you are a free moral agent? Do you never experience the least inconsistency between your activity and dependence? And do you feel as free and voluntary in all your actions, as if you were altogether independent of the Supreme Being? If all this be true, you must acknowledge, that you have the evidence of reason, that you act dependently, that you have the evidence of common sense, that you act freely; and that you have the evidence of constant experience, that your activity and dependence are entirely consistent. You are therefore, as *certain* of the truth and consistency of your activity and dependence, as you can be of any other truth, whose evidence depends upon the united testimony of reason and common sense.

## SERMON X.

MAN'S ACTIVITY AND DEPENDENCE ILLUSTRATED AND RECONCILED.

PHILIPPIANS ii, 12, 13.

*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

HAVING endeavored to reconcile man's activity and dependence in the preceding discourse, I proceed to draw a number of inferences from the subject, which may serve to throw light upon some of the most difficult things, which are to be found either in the word, or in the works of God.

INFERENCE 1.—If it be true that men *act*, while they are acted upon by a divine operation; then their actions are their own, and not the actions of God. The divine agency is not human agency, nor human agency the divine agency. Though God does work in men to repent, to believe and to obey; yet God does not repent, nor believe, nor obey, but the persons themselves on whom he operates. When God works in men, to will and to do, he does not act in their stead, but they act for themselves; and therefore what they do is entirely distinct from what he does. Whether they act virtuously or viciously, their actions are their own, and the praise or the blame is their own, as much as if they acted independently. Some suppose, that if God produces our moral exercises, then they must be his, or at least, exactly resemble his, in their moral quality. But there is no foundation to draw this conclusion, since our moral exercises are the *productions* of the divine *power*, and not *emanations* of the *divine*

*nature.* It is true, all emanations of the divine nature must necessarily partake of the qualities of the divine nature, as much as all streams must necessarily partake of the qualities of the fountain, from which they flow. But the works of God are not emanations of his nature, but only the fruits of his power. No created object, therefore, bears the least resemblance of the Deity, simply because he made it. We know God has created a multitude of serpents, vipers, and other noxious animals, which, though they prove him to be possessed of infinite power, yet afford no evidence of his being possessed of any malignity, which resembles the sting of scorpions; or the poison of asps. If God must necessarily stamp his own natural and moral image upon every production of his hand; then a flower, a dove, or a monster, must bear the natural and moral image of their Maker, as much as a saint, or an angel. Saints and angels do, indeed, bear both the natural and moral image of God; but they bear this image not simply because he gave them existence, but because he was pleased to give them such an *intelligent* and *holy* existence, as resembles his natural and moral perfections. It is, therefore, as consistent with the moral rectitude of the Deity, to produce sinful, as holy exercises in the minds of men. His operations and their voluntary exercises are totally distinct. And if we only make, and keep up, this distinction between divine and human agency, we shall clearly perceive that no imputation can be fastened upon the moral character of God, while he works in all mankind both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

INFERENCE 2.—If men always act under a divine operation, then they always act of *necessity*, though not of *compulsion*. The Deity, by working in them to will and to do, lays them under an absolute neces-

sity of acting freely; but this is directly opposed to compulsion. God may cause men to *move*, without making them willing to *move*; but he cannot cause them to *act*, without making them willing to *act*. Action always implies choice; and choice always implies motive. It is out of the power of the Deity, therefore, to oblige men to act, without making them willing to act in the view of motives. Accordingly, when he works in us both to will and to do, he first exhibits motives before our minds, and then excites us to act voluntarily in the view of the motives exhibited. And in thus acting voluntarily in the view of the motives presented to us, we exercise the most perfect liberty or moral freedom. For, we can frame no higher idea of *moral freedom*, than acting voluntarily, or just as we please, in the view of motives. This, however, is perfectly consistent with *moral necessity*. Suppose a man at leisure desires to read; and some person presents him a Bible and a Novel. Though he knows the contents of each of these books, yet it depends upon a divine operation on his mind, which of them he shall choose to read; for the bare perception of motive is incapable of producing volition. If, in this case, God works in him to will to read the Bible, it is his own choice in the view of the object chosen. He is not *compelled* to read the Bible, though he is necessarily obliged to read it. He acts under a moral necessity, but not under a natural compulsion. Take another illustration from Scripture. God said to Samuel on a certain day, To-morrow I will send thee a man whom thou shalt anoint king over Israel. The man proved to be Saul. The story is this. Saul's father lost his asses, and sent Saul with a servant to search for them. They went and searched, until they despaired of success. But just as they were determining to return, the servant

proposed to go to the man of God. The proposal being agreeable to Saul, he cheerfully complied with it; and they both repaired to the house of Samuel, who treated them with peculiar respect. The next day Saul was anointed king over Israel, and the purpose of God, in sending him to Samuel, was completely fulfilled. Now, in every step of his journey, Saul acted freely in the view of motives. He left his father's house, from the motive of his father's authority; and he went to the house of Samuel, from the motive suggested by his servant. But, we are to remember, that God *sent* him to Samuel, and directed every step he took, to reach his house. Hence there was a necessary and infallible connexion between Saul's actions and the motives from which he acted. And this certain connexion could be owing to no other cause, than a secret divine influence on his will, which gave energy and success to the motives, which induced him to execute the designs of providence. God made him *willing* to go to Samuel, but did not *compel* him to go. He led him thither by a *moral* necessity, without the least compulsion or constraint. And thus men always act both *necessarily* and *freely*, while God works in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

INFERENCE 3.—If saints can work out their own salvation under a positive influence of the Deity; then sinners can work out their own destruction, under his positive influence. As saints can act, while they are acted upon; so sinners can act, while they are acted upon. As saints can act freely, under a divine influence; so sinners can act freely, under a divine influence. And as saints can act virtuously, under a divine agency; so sinners can act criminally, under a divine agency. Hence it is just as easy to see, that



sinner can work out their own destruction, as that saints can work out their own salvation, under the operation of the Deity. And this is agreeable to the whole tenor of Scripture. Pharaoh is represented, as acting under the positive influence of the divine Being who led him on in the path to ruin. It is repeatedly said, that God hardened his heart; and repeatedly said, that he hardened his own heart. According to the account given of his conduct towards God, and of God's conduct towards him, he was as really acted upon, in working out his own destruction, as saints are, in working out their own salvation. The unbelieving Jews, in our Savior's day, were judicially hardened; and yet they were severely reprov'd for hardening themselves. The same passage, in the sixth of Isaiah, is applied to them in both these senses. The passage stands thus in the Prophet. "And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not, and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." This appears to be a judicial hardening; but yet Christ applies it to those, who hardened themselves. "Therefore I speak to them in parables: because they seeing, see not; and hearing, hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive. For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have *they* closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." The apostle John considers the Jews as

under a judicial blindness, and applies this passage to them, as descriptive of their guilty and miserable condition. "Therefore they could not believe, because Esaias said again, *He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they might not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.*" The apostle Paul, however, cites this passage as a proof of their hardening their own hearts. "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet to our fathers, saying, *Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive. For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.*" These different applications of the same text can be reconciled, only on the supposition, that the Prophet, that Christ, and the Apostles meant to convey the idea, that sinners work out their own destruction, under the positive influence of the Deity. And this is expressly asserted by the apostle Paul, concerning the reprobate Jews. "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for: but the *election* hath obtained it, and the rest were *blinded*, or as it is in the margin, *hardened.*"

INFERENCE 4.—If God can work in saints both to will and to do that which is virtuous and holy; then he might have made man upright, and formed him in his own moral image, at first. Some suppose, it was out of the power of God to create Adam, at first, in righteousness and true holiness; because righteousness and true holiness belong to the heart; and are free, voluntary exercises. But though every species of moral rectitude be a free voluntary exercise of the

heart; yet it may nevertheless be the fruit of a divine operation. The heart may be created as well as the understanding, or moral exercises as well as natural faculties. It appears from what has been said, that the hearts of saints are created, or that their free and voluntary exercises are the production of divine power. Where, then, is the difficulty of conceiving, that God made man upright at first, and created him in his own moral image? If saints may be the workmanship of God created unto good works, in the meridian of life; then Adam might have been the workmanship of God created unto good works in the first moment of his existence. God was as able to work in Adam, both to will and to do that which was virtuous and holy, the first moment of his creation, as he is, to work in saints both to will and to do that which is virtuous and holy, in any period of their lives. The cases are exactly similar. If holiness can be created in one man, it may be in another; and if it can be created in one period of life, it may be in another. There is nothing, therefore, in the supposition of man's *original* rectitude, which is repugnant either to the nature of holiness, as a *voluntary* exercise; or to the nature of man, as a *moral* agent.

INFERENCE 5.—Since God can work in men both to will and to do of his good pleasure, it is as easy to account for the first offence of Adam, as for any other sin. Many, who believe his original rectitude, suppose it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to account for his first act of disobedience, in eating of the forbidden fruit. But in as much as they acknowledge the fact, they endeavor, in some way or other, to solve the difficulty.

Some say, that Adam being necessarily *dependent*, was necessarily *mutable* and *liable* to fall. It is true,

indeed, Adam was necessarily dependent and liable to fall: but by whom was he exposed to this evil? not by himself, not by satan, not by any *created* agent. God can make creatures *immutable* with respect to all beings but Himself. Angels and the spirits of just men above, are *immutable* with respect to all beings but the Deity. So long therefore as Adam retained his original rectitude, he was equally *immutable* in his moral character, and stood above the power and influence of satan, or any other malignant seducer.

Some say, that God having made man upright, *left him to the freedom of his own will*; in consequence of which he sinned and fell. That God left man to the freedom of his own will must be allowed; but how this can account for his first transgression is hard to conceive. Every moral agent is *left* to the freedom of his own will, so long as he remains a moral agent; because freedom of will is essential to moral agency. And there is no evidence from Scripture nor reason, that man was any more *left* to the freedom of his own will *before*, than *after* his fall. But if by being *left* to the freedom of his own will be meant, that God *withdrew* some aid or support, which he had given him before, and which was necessary in order to resist temptation; then such a *suspension* of divine aid or support, must have excused him for eating of the forbidden fruit; since there could have been no criminality in his not resisting a temptation, which was above his *natural* power to resist. Besides, there is an absurdity in supposing, that Adam could be led into sin, by the violence of temptation, while his heart remained perfectly holy. For, a perfectly holy heart, perfectly hates every motive, every suggestion, every temptation to sin. This was exemplified in the conduct of Christ, when he was so artfully and violently assaulted by the devil. Satan's tempting him to disobey his Father's

have conveyed holiness to his children, and they likewise to theirs; and so there must have been a constant succession of holy families down to this day; which we find is contrary to universal observation and experience.

Others suppose, that the depravity of the soul originates from the mortality of the body. Though they allow, that the soul comes pure and clean from the hands of God; yet they imagine a corrupt mortal body must soon defile it. They say, while the minds of children are weak and ignorant, their bodily appetites and passions gain the ascendancy, and lead them into sinful courses and evil habits. But this supposition is clogged with insurmountable difficulties. How can a corrupt body corrupt a pure mind? At most, the body can afford only temptations to sin; but temptations of themselves have no power to corrupt a pure heart. Christ was once an infant. He grew like other infants, in body and mind; but yet his mind was never corrupted by his body. Though he was subject to hunger, thirst, pain, weariness, and mortality; yet these bodily appetites and infirmities never led him into intemperance, impatience, or any other moral evil. His soul was holy, harmless, undefiled, while united to an earthly, feeble, mortal body. Hence it appears to be contrary to fact, that the depravity of the soul should arise from the mortality of the body; or that the mortal bodies of infants should morally defile their pure and immortal spirits.

But though we cannot suppose, that infants derive their moral corruption from Adam, nor from their own mortal bodies; yet we can easily conceive of their becoming depraved, in consequence of the first apostacy. God constituted such a connexion between Adam and his posterity, that if he sinned, they should

all become sinners. Accordingly, in consequence of Adam's first transgression, God now brings his posterity into the world, in a state of moral depravity. But how? the answer is easy. When God forms the souls of infants, he forms them with moral powers, and makes them men in miniature. And being men in miniature, he works in them, as he does in other men, both to will and to do of his good pleasure: or produces those moral exercises in their hearts, in which moral depravity properly and essentially consists. *Moral* depravity can take place no where but in *moral* agents; and moral agents can never act but only as they are acted upon by a divine operation. It is just as easy, therefore, to account for moral depravity in infancy, as in any other period of life.

INFERENCE 7.—If God can work in saints both to will and to do of his good pleasure; then he can convert sinners, consistently with their activity and moral freedom. God operates precisely in the same manner, in producing the first exercise of grace, as in producing the second, or any other. All that he does, in converting, or regenerating a sinner, is to work in him to will and to do that which is holy, instead of that which is sinful. The sinner is not *passive*, but *active* in this change. He acts as freely, while God turns him from sin to holiness, as ever he did in his life. He feels no violence done to his will, nor the least constraint thrown upon his moral freedom. God has often converted some of the most hardened and obstinate sinners. He subdued the hearts of his rebellious people, in Babylon. He converted, in one day, three thousand of those, who had been concerned in crucifying the Lord of glory. He met Paul on his way to Damascus, and instantaneously turned that blasphemer and persecutor into a meek and humble fol-

lower of Christ. And he can now convert as many and as great sinners as he pleases, in perfect consistency with the free and voluntary exercise of all their natural powers. God has no occasion of sending sinners to another world, in order to soften and change their hearts; for he is always able to work in them both to will and to do that which is pleasing in his sight, without destroying, or even obstructing their moral freedom.

INFERENCE 8.—If God always works in men both to will and to do; then they are as able to work out their own salvation, as to perform the common actions of life. The only reason, why sinners suppose they are less able to work out their own salvation, than to do the common actions of life, is because they imagine they need more divine assistance, in working out their own salvation, than in doing any thing else. If they are urged to repent, they say they cannot repent, of themselves; for repentance is the fruit of the Spirit. If they are urged to believe in Christ, they say they cannot believe, of themselves; for faith is the gift of God. And if they are urged to make themselves a new heart, they say they cannot do this, of themselves; for it is the work of God to give them a new heart. These expressions plainly intimate, that they suppose they always act, of themselves, except in the concerns of religion; and of consequence, that they are less able to perform religious duties, than the common actions of life. But there is no just ground for this conclusion. They never do act, of themselves. They live, and move, and have their being in God, who constantly works in them both to will and to do, in every instance of their conduct. They are as able, therefore, to do right, as to do wrong; to do their duty, as to neglect their duty; to love God, as to hate God; to

choose life, as to choose death; to walk in the narrow way to heaven, as to walk in the broad way to hell; and to turn from sin to holiness; as to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. Hence they are expressly required to *begin* to be holy, and to perform the very act of turning, repenting, and changing the heart. "Let the wicked *forsake his way*, and the unrighteous man *his thoughts*, and let him *return* to the Lord." Isaiah iv, 7. "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die? *Cast away* from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and *make you a new heart*, and a *new spirit*: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord: wherefore *turn yourselves*; and live ye." Ezekiel xviii, 31, 32; and xxxiii, 11. "Therefore also now saith the Lord, *Turn ye even to me* with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. And *rend your heart*, and not your garments, and *turn* to the Lord your God." Joel ii, 12, 13. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you: *cleanse* your hands ye sinners, and *purify your hearts*, ye double minded." James iv, 8. "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the opening of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledge? *Turn ye at my reproof*." Proverbs i, 20, 21, 22. "O Jerusalem, *wash thine heart from wickedness*, that thou mayest be saved: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee." Jeremiah iv, 14. "*Wash ye, make you clean, put away* the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; *cease* to do evil, *learn* to do well." Isaiah i, 16, 17. If there be any justice or propriety in these commands, then sinners are as



able to *turn* from sin, to *change* their hearts, or to *begin* to be holy; as to perform any other religious duty, or common action.

Besides, the sacred writers borrow similitudes from the common conduct of men, to illustrate the duty and obligation of sinners to repent and embrace the gospel. The evangelical Prophet cries, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price." These similitudes plainly suppose, that every sinner is as able to embrace the gospel, as a thirsty man is to drink water, or an hungry man to eat the most delicious food. In the parable of the marriage supper, God is represented as sending forth his servants, to invite sinners to come and receive the fruits of his love. This invitation carries the idea, that sinners are as able to come to the gospel feast, as to come to any other, to which they are kindly invited. Take away this point of resemblance, and the parable is totally unmeaning, or extremely impertinent. The parable of the prodigal son, is designed to illustrate the immediate duty of sinners to return to God, from whom they have unreasonably departed. But where is the beauty or propriety of the parable, unless sinners are as able to return to their heavenly Father, as an undutiful, wandering child is to return to his earthly parent? By the obedience of the Rechabites, God reprov'd the disobedience of his own people. But how did that example reach the case, unless the Israelites were as able to obey the commands of God, as the Rechabites were to obey the command of their father? It is the plain language of these similitudes, that sinners are as able to work out their own salvation, with fear and trembling, as to perform the most common and ordinary

actions of life. Hence there is the same propriety in exhorting them to eat, and drink, and do every thing to the glory of God, as there is in exhorting them to do any thing at all. And hence too that whole system of unregenerate duties, which has been built on the principle, that sinners are *passive* in regeneration, and of course are under an *ethico-physical* inability to do any thing in a holy and *gracious* manner, appears to be without the least foundation in Scripture, or reason.

INFERENCE 9.—Since God works in all mankind both to will and to do, there appears no reasonable objection against the doctrine of divine decrees. If God be a perfectly wise agent, he must determine all his own conduct. But he cannot determine all his own conduct without determining how he will work in us both to will and to do; and by determining this, he must necessarily determine how we shall will and do through every period of our existence. It is just as certain, therefore, that God determines all our actions, as that he determines all his own. But the divine decrees, so long as they lie in the divine mind *unexecuted*, have no more influence upon us, than they had before we existed. And when they actually reach us, or when God actually fulfils them upon us; he only works in us both to will and to do, agreeably to his eternal purpose; which operation we have seen is entirely consistent with our own free agency. Nor do the decrees of God subject us to the least disadvantage, with respect to time or eternity. For since God works in us both to will and to do, it absolutely depends upon his *determination*, whether we shall be holy and happy, or sinful and miserable, in this life and in that which is to come. And if all this depends upon his *determination*, it is of no consequence

to us, *when* he determines our characters and conditions, whether in time or eternity; because we know from the perfection of his nature, that his determination must be precisely the *same*, whether formed before, or since he brought us into existence. In a word, if there be no objection against God's working in us both to will and to do, there can be none against his decreeing from eternity to work in us both to will and to do. His decrees have no influence upon us until they reach us, and when they do reach us, they reach us by that divine agency, which coincides with all the liberty we are capable of exercising, or even of conceiving.

INFERENCE 10.—It appears from God's working in all men both to will and to do, that he governs the *moral*, as well as the *natural*, world. This is denied by many, who believe in divine providence. Though they acknowledge, that God has a controlling influence over all the material and animal creation; yet they suppose, that it is out of his power, to govern the free and voluntary actions of moral agents. But if he works in all men both to will and to do of his good pleasure; then he governs the *moral*, as well as the *natural*, world, and both by a positive agency, and not a bare permission. It is impossible for the Deity to govern any of his creatures or works, by permission; because his permission would be nothing short of annihilation. A prince may exercise permission towards his subjects, because they are able to act, without his support or assistance; but God cannot exercise permission towards his reasonable creatures, because they cannot act, without his working in them both to will and to do. The Deity, therefore, is so far from *permitting* moral agents to act independently of himself; that, on the other hand, he puts forth a *positive influ-*

ence to make them act, in every instance of their conduct, just as he pleases. He bends all the *moral*, as well as all the *natural* world to his own views; and makes all his creatures, as well as all his works, answer the ends for which they were created. Hence this will forever remain a just definition of his Providence; "His most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions."

INFERENCE 11.—If sinners are able to act freely, while they are acted upon by the Deity; then they have no manner of excuse, for neglecting to obey any of his commands. They all acknowledge, that they have no excuse, for neglecting to obey any divine command, which they are *able* to obey; and that they should be *able* to obey *all* the divine commands, were it not for their dependence upon divine influence, in all their moral exercises: so that finally all their excuses centre and terminate in their absolute dependence upon God. If, therefore, this shelter fails them, all their excuses vanish, and every divine command lies upon them in its full force and obligation. But we have shown, that their dependence affords them no protection, because it is not the ground of their inability. They can act as freely, as if they were not dependent; and they are as able to obey the divine commands, as if they could act of themselves. They can love God, repent of sin, believe in Christ, and perform every religious duty, as well as they can think, or speak, or walk. They have no cloak for the least sin, whether internal or external. And if they are ever brought under conviction by the divine Spirit, their excuses will all forsake them, and their consciences will condemn them for impenitence, unbelief, and hardness of heart, as much as for any other sins, in the course of their lives. Their mouths will be stopped, and they will stand speechless

and self-condemned before God. They will feel, that their inability is a crime, and not a calamity. They will feel, that they have been free and voluntary in all their disobedience, and therefore deserve God's wrath and curse, both in this life and in that which is to come. Such are the views and feelings, which sinners must have sooner or later, if they ever embrace the gospel and secure the salvation of their souls. Let them, therefore, immediately give up all their excuses, which cannot stand before the bar of God, nor even before the bar of their own enlightened consciences. Let them no longer cast the blame of their sins upon God; but take it to themselves, and repent in dust and ashes. God now commandeth all men every where to repent; and except they do repent, they must unavoidably and eternally perish.

**INFERENCE 12.**—If God works in saints both to will and to do in all their gracious exercises; then they ought to be clothed with humility, and walk softly before him. “Who hath made them to differ? and what have they that they have not received?” All their future exercises are under the divine influence, without which they can do nothing. Let them always acknowledge God in all their ways, that he may direct their paths. Let them watch and pray without ceasing, and work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. Renouncing all self-dependence, and remembering Noah, Lot, David, Peter, and themselves, let them trust in God alone, who is able to keep them from falling, and to present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. Amen.

## SERMON XI.

LOVE THE ESSENCE OF OBEDIENCE. :

ROMANS xiii, 10.

*Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

IT appears from the words to which this passage refers, that the Apostle is here speaking, not of the ceremonial law, which ceased at the death of Christ; but of the moral law, which still remains in its full force and obligation. This law, which is founded in the nature of things, and which is level to every capacity, has been very generally misunderstood and perverted. The Scribes and Pharisees, and even Paul himself before his conversion, totally misapprehended its proper meaning. Nor is it much better understood now, than formerly. This, however, is very easy to be accounted for. Those, who are unwilling to do their duty, are always unwilling to become acquainted with it. An undutiful child is disposed to misunderstand his father's commands; an unfaithful servant is apt to mistake his master's orders; a rebellious subject is prone to misconstrue the laws of the state; and the same spirit of disobedience inclines all classes of sinners to misunderstand the first and fundamental rule of duty. But a clear knowledge of the nature and extent of the law of love seems to be very necessary, in order to understand the doctrines and duties of the gospel, and to reconcile them with each other. It is a matter of real importance, therefore, to set the declaration in the text in a clear and consistent light. And in order to this, it is proposed,

I. To describe the nature of love in general.

II. To describe the nature of true love in particular.

And,

III. To show, that true love is the fulfilling of the law.

I. The nature of love in general is to be described.

If we turn our attention inwardly and examine the operations of our own minds, we shall be convinced, that love is something very different from either perception, reason, or conscience. These are natural faculties, which do their office independently of the will. It depends upon our perception, not upon our will, whether an object shall appear either black or white. It depends upon our reason, not upon our will, whether a proposition shall appear either true or false. It depends upon our conscience, not upon our will, whether an action shall appear either good or evil. But it depends entirely upon our *choice*, whether we shall love either a white or a black object, either a true or false proposition, either a good or an evil action. Hence we intuitively know, that love is a free, voluntary affection, which is entirely distinct from every natural faculty of the mind. It is neither a power nor principle of action, but rather an act or exercise itself. And in this respect, it totally differs from every bodily and mental taste; in which we are altogether passive. We cannot help tasting the sweetness of honey, nor relishing the beauties of nature and of art. But we are under no natural necessity of loving a beautiful flower, nor an amiable character. It is, therefore, the voice of universal experience, that love is a free, voluntary exercise, which essentially differs from any natural power, principle, taste, or sensation of the human mind. Freedom and activity are essential to love in general, The next thing is,

## II. To describe the nature of true love in particular.

Since we are free and voluntary in loving, there is a just ground of distinction between true love and false. And agreeably to this distinction, God requires one kind of love, and forbids another. He requires us to love himself supremely, but forbids us so to love ourselves, or any other created object. These two kinds of love are essentially different. The one is true love, and the other false; the one is pure benevolence, and the other is real selfishness; the one is the fulfilling, and the other the transgression, of the law. It appears, therefore, to be necessary to point out the peculiar properties of true love, by which it is distinguished from false.

1. True love is universal, extending to being in general, or to God and all his creatures. "The righteous man regardeth the life of his beast." The primary object of true benevolence is being simply considered, or a mere capacity of enjoying happiness and suffering pain. It necessarily embraces God, and all sensitive natures. Though the man of true benevolence takes a *peculiar complacency* in God and in all other benevolent beings; yet he *wishes well* to creatures, that have no benevolence, and even to such as are incapable of all moral exercises. It is, therefore, the nature of true benevolence to run parallel with universal being, whether uncreated or created; whether rational or irrational; whether holy or unholy. And in this respect, it essentially differs from that selfish and false affection, which centres in one individual, and terminates in personal happiness.

2. True love is impartial. It regards every proper object of benevolence according to its apparent worth and importance in the scale of being. It regards God according to his greatness and goodness, and of course



more than all created beings. And among created beings, it prefers the great to the small, and the good to the great. The truly benevolent man measures his affections towards every being, according to its capacity and disposition of doing, and of receiving good; and not according to the relation which it bears to his own private interest. As he values the happiness of the whole universe more than the happiness of a particular part; so he values the happiness of each part in exact proportion to its intrinsic and comparative worth. Such impartiality distinguishes true love from that tender mercy of the wicked, which is real malevolence and cruelty to all, who oppose their private, personal interest.

3. True love is not only universal and impartial, but disinterested. Mercenary love can never form a virtuous character. This Cicero demonstrates in his treatise concerning moral ends. This all dramatic writers acknowledge, by forming their amiable characters upon the principle of disinterested benevolence. And this God himself maintains in his controversy with Satan about the sincerity of Job. If there be any such thing as virtue, therefore, it must consist in disinterested love. Accordingly the Scripture represents all holy and virtuous affections as disinterested. David says of the citizen of Zion, though "he sweareth to his own hurt, he changeth not." Paul says of himself, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give

my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Why is charity so superlatively excellent, and so absolutely essential to a virtuous character? The Apostle tells us in the next verse but one. It is because "*charity seeketh not her own.*" Such disinterested love the gospel every where inculcates, and especially in the precepts following. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him water to drink. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." According to the plain and obvious meaning of these passages, true love is disinterested, and essentially different from every selfish and sinful affection. It only remains to show,

III. That true love is the fulfilling of the law. The spirit of this proposition is, that pure, genuine benevolence is the essence and comprehension of all the obedience, which God requires in his word. To establish this great and fundamental doctrine of religion, I would observe,

1. That true benevolence conforms the heart to God. God is love. His whole moral character consists in the various exercises and expressions of pure benevolence. Those, therefore, who feel and express a truly benevolent spirit, are conformed to God, the standard of moral perfection. So our Savior taught his disciples. "Ye have heard, that it hath been said; Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on

the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore *perfect*, even as your Father which is in heaven is *perfect*." If the moral perfection of man consist in conformity to the moral perfection of God, and the moral perfection of God consist in love; then love must be the fulfilling of the law. Certainly God cannot require man to be more holy or perfect than Himself.

2. It appears from express declarations of Scripture, that love answers the full demand of the law. When a certain man asked our Savior, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" He replied, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment: And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." This last clause fixes our Lord's meaning, and leaves no room to doubt, that true love fulfils, not only the first and second, but every other precept of the law. The Apostle James, speaking on the same subject, says, "The end of the commandment is *charity* out of a pure heart." By this he declares that charity or true love fully answers the spirit and design of the law. And he conveys the same sentiment by a different mode of expression. "If ye fulfil the royal law according to Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The Apostle Paul, having exhorted believers to exercise a variety of holy affections, concludes by saying, "Above all these things put on charity which is the bond of perfectness." By this he in-

timates, that true love comprizes and links together all the christian graces and virtues, which form a perfect moral character. And he says the same thing again in plainer terms. "*All the law is fulfilled in one word, even this; Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself.*" These passages, taken in their most easy and natural sense, plainly teach us, that love answers all the demands of the law.

3. It is the nature of true love to make us feel and act in every respect, just as God requires. So far as we possess true benevolence, we shall both internally and externally obey every divine command. We shall not only feel properly towards God, our neighbor, and ourselves; but also express our feelings by all proper external actions. Are we commanded to rejoice that the Lord reigneth? If we love God, we shall sincerely rejoice in his supreme and universal dominion. Are we commanded to pray without ceasing? If we love God, we shall take pleasure in pouring out our hearts before him in prayer. Are we commanded to do every thing to the glory of God? If we love God, we shall do every thing heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men. Are we commanded to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? If we esteem him the chiefest among ten thousand, we shall naturally exercise that faith, which worketh by love. Are we exhorted to do to others, as we would, that others should do to us? If we love others as ourselves, we shall as really seek their interest, as our own. Are rulers required to promote the good of their subjects? If they love their subjects, they will exert all their power and abilities, to promote their peace and prosperity. Is it the duty of subjects to obey their rulers? If they love their rulers, they will obey them, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. Does it become the rich

to be kind to the poor? If the love of God be shed abroad in their hearts, they cannot see proper objects of charity, and yet shut up their bowels of compassion from them. In a word, if there be any other commandment, which has not been mentioned, love will prompt men to obey it.

This natural tendency of love, to produce every virtuous feeling and action, is beautifully illustrated by the Apostle's description of charity; which, he says, "suffereth long, and is kind, and which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Such patience, kindness, candor, and self-denial, love has often produced. Love led Abraham to offer up Isaac. Love led Moses to renounce all his worldly prospects, and to suffer affliction with the people of God. Love led the prophets, the Apostles, and primitive christians, to perform astonishing acts of obedience and suffering. And love led the man Christ Jesus to suffer and die on the cross for the salvation of sinners. Love therefore, is the fulfilling of the law, as it prompts men to do every thing, which God commands. Add to this,

4, Love restrains men from every thing, which God forbids. The law has prohibitions as well as precepts. God forbids some things as well as requires others. And it is the nature of love to restrain men from doing what God forbids, as well as to prompt them to do what God enjoins. We read, "Charity envieth not, charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity." So long as love reigns in the heart, it restrains men from envy, pride, vanity, resentment, and every unseemly thought, word and action, which God has forbidden. And it is in more particular reference to this restraining influence of

love, that the Apostle says it is the fulfilling of the law. This appears from the words before the text, Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; for, he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." If a man love his neighbor, he will not injure his person, nor property, nor character. If a man love his enemy, he will not render evil for evil, but blessing for cursing. If a man love his country, he will do nothing to injure its prosperity and happiness. And if a man love God, he will neither profane his name, nor dishonor his Son, nor resist his Spirit, nor oppose his kingdom, nor complain of his providence, nor do any thing to rob him of his glory. Love worketh no ill to any created, nor uncreated being; and, therefore, it is in this and all other respects, the fulfilling of the law.

## IMPROVEMENT.

1. If all obedience to the divine law consists in the *positive* exercise of true love; then all disobedience to the divine law must consist in the *positive* exercise of false love, or real selfishness. The mere want of love cannot be a transgression of the law of love. Though all the animal tribes are totally destitute of that love, which the law requires; yet they do not disobey the will of their Maker. A mere want is a mere nothing, and a mere nothing has no natural, nor moral qualities. It is as hard to conceive, that disobedience should consist in mere privation, as to conceive, that obedience should. It is as hard to conceive, that sin

should originate from a mere want of holiness, as to conceive, that holiness should originate from the mere want of sin. This leads us to suppose, that both sin and holiness have a positive existence, and a diametrically opposite nature. And since all the holiness which the law requires, consists in positive benevolence, it naturally follows that all the sin, which the law condemns, consists in positive selfishness. These two kinds of love do actually exist and oppose each other. Interested love opposes disinterested; partial love opposes impartial; the love of a detached individual opposes the love of being in general. Selfishness disposes any person to seek his own private, separate interest, in opposition to the glory of God and the good of the universe. The law, which requires positive benevolence, must necessarily condemn such positive selfishness, and nothing else. Accordingly we find, that nothing but selfishness and its various modifications are condemned in the Bible. The Apostle tells us, that "sin is a *transgression* of the law," and not a *mere want* of conformity to it. Positive selfishness, and nothing else, is the transgression of the law of pure, disinterested benevolence.

2. If love is the fulfilling of the law, then a good heart consists in love. A good heart is certainly required. God says, "My son, give me thine heart." And he says to sinners in general, "Make you a new heart, and a new spirit." He also reprobates the best services of those, who are destitute of a good heart. "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Solomon represents the heart as forming the moral character of every person. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." It is, indeed, the general representation of Scripture, that a good heart consti-

tutes a good man. Now, if this be true, a good heart must consist in love; for love is the fulfilling of the law. Hence, when God requires a good heart, he requires love, and when he requires love, he requires a good heart. And though it is said in the text, that love is the fulfilling of the law; yet it may be as truly said, that a good heart is the fulfilling of the law.

It is the dictate of common sense, that a good heart consists in love. For only separate love from a good heart, and there will be no good heart left. If a good heart were distinct from love, then we could form a clear idea of it distinct from love. But whenever we think of a good heart, either in ourselves or in others, we think of kind, tender, benevolent feelings, or the exercises of pure, divine love. And it is out of our power to conceive of a good heart, which is not wholly composed of good affections, or the genuine feelings of true benevolence.

If we now attend to the fruits of a good heart, we shall find them to be the same as the fruits of love. A good heart will produce spiritual and divine knowledge. Speaking of his peculiar people, God says, "I will give them an heart to *know* me." The Apostle ascribes the same effect to love. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and *knoweth* God." The Scripture also represents a good heart as the source of all moral goodness. "A good man, says our Lord, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things." But if love be the fulfilling of the law, then love is equally the source of all moral goodness. According to Scripture, as well as the common sense of mankind, the love and the good heart, which God requires, are one and the same thing, and produce the same effects. Does a good heart



form the whole moral character? So does love. Does a good heart comprise all that the law requires? So does love. Does a good heart produce every holy affection and virtuous action? So does love. There is not a single quality in a good heart, which cannot be found in love. Nor can a good heart be described, without describing that very love, which is the fulfilling of the law. Whoever, therefore, attempts to distinguish true love from a good heart, or a good heart from true love, undertakes a task, which the Scripture will never enable him to perform.

3. If true love be the good heart, which God requires; then false love or selfishness is the bad heart, which God condemns. A bad heart is directly opposite to a good heart. And if a good heart consists in benevolence, a bad heart must consist in selfishness. This conclusion is supported by the description, which the sacred writers give of a bad heart. They represent it as productive of moral blindness. The Apostle says of sinners, "Their understanding is *darkened*, being alienated from the life of God, through the *ignorance* that is in them, *because of the blindness of the heart.*" And again he says, "He that *loveth not knoweth not God.*" These representations agree with the declaration of Christ. "If thine eye, that is *thine heart be evil*, thy whole body shall be full of *darkness.*" Now, it is found by universal experience, that selfishness has the same tendency to blind the mind with respect to God and duty. We never pretend to confide in our own judgment, nor in that of others, when we believe, that either they or we are under the influence of selfish feelings. In this respect, selfishness and a bad heart are exactly alike.

And so they are in another respect. A bad heart is the source of all *evil affections and actions.* This our

Savior expressly asserts. "An evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Such are the natural fruits of an evil heart: and such, the Apostle tells us, are the fruits of self-love. "In the last days, says he, perilous times shall come. For men shall be *lovers of their own selves*." This is selfishness, which, he proceeds to say, shall make men "covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." According to these descriptions of self-love and a bad heart, it appears, that they are one and the same thing. Selfishness is all the evil heart, that we ever find described in Scripture, that we ever see acted out, or that we ever feel in our own breasts. We must conclude, therefore, that a bad heart wholly consists in selfishness, which is inimical to God and man, and which is productive of all moral evil.

4. It appears from what has been said in this discourse, that many entertain very wrong ideas upon the subject we have been considering.

Some suppose, that a good heart essentially consists in a good principle, taste, or relish, which is totally independent of the will. They imagine, that Adam was created with such a good principle, taste, or relish; which was the source of all his holy exercises and actions, before the fall. And upon this ground they suppose that regeneration consists in implanting a new principle, taste, or relish in the mind, which is the source of all the holy exercises of the subject of grace. But this sentiment is totally repugnant to the law of

love. This law requires no such principle of holiness, but holiness itself. This law requires nothing which is *pervious* to love, but love itself. This law requires no dormant, inactive, torpid disposition, inclination, or taste, but the free, voluntary exercise of true benevolence.

Some suppose, that a bad heart consists in a bad principle, disposition, or inclination; which is entirely distinct from sinful, voluntary exercises. They represent a corrupt nature or depraved heart, as the source of all sinful affections and passions. And they maintain, that this corrupt nature is conveyed from Adam to all his posterity, who, they suppose, are morally depraved, before they have one sinful exercise, volition, or affection. But it appears from what has been said in this discourse, that all sinfulness consists in the various exercises and modifications of self-love. The divine law condemns these exercises and nothing else. And our consciences concur with the sentence of the law, and condemn us for sinful exercises only. Hence we intuitively know, that we never did derive a morally corrupt nature, or a morally corrupt principle, or a morally corrupt heart, from Adam. All our sin is personal, and consists in our own free and voluntary exercises.

Some suppose, that sinners are under no obligation to exercise that love, which the law requires, until they have a new principle, disposition, or inclination implanted in their minds, by the regenerating influences of the divine Spirit. But if there can be no such thing as an holy principle, disposition, or inclination, which is distinct from true love, or the exercise of real benevolence; then they may be obliged to have that love, which the law requires, before they are regenerated as well as afterwards. Their obligation to love

God does not depend upon any holy principle, which is distinct from love; but upon their *natural capacity* to love all the proper objects of benevolence. They are as able to love God, before they are regenerated as afterwards; and therefore are as much obliged to love God, before they are born again, as after they have been made the subjects of special grace.

Some suppose that sinners are *passive* in having a new heart, or in becoming real saints. But if a new heart does not consist in a principle of holiness, but in the exercise of holiness or true benevolence; then the sinner may be as *active* in beginning to be holy, as in continuing to be holy; in turning from sin to holiness, as in perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Some suppose, that, after men are regenerated, they have two hearts, an old heart and a new one, which co-exist in their minds, and constantly produce diametrically opposite affections. The new heart, they suppose, is a new principle, which constantly produces holy affections; and the old heart is an old principle, which constantly produces unholy affections. And upon this ground, they suppose, there is a continual warfare in the minds of good men, between their old and new heart.\* But if the new heart consists in that love, which the law requires, and the old heart consists in that love, which the law condemns; then saints never have properly two hearts, but only one; which is sometimes holy and sometimes sinful. This is agreeable to their daily experience. They find their heart to be like a deceitful bow. It may be one hour in a holy and heavenly frame; and the next hour in a frame entirely different. But they are never conscious of loving and of hating God, at one and the same time.

\* It is not denied, that there is a spiritual warfare in the minds of true christians; but only that this warfare does not arise from two distinct opposite hearts.

Some suppose that good men are better than their free and voluntary exercises are. They imagine, that saints may have grace in principle, while they have none in exercise. But since love is the fulfilling of the law, there is no foundation for this sentiment. Saints have just as much grace as true love, and no more. They are just as good as their holy exercises are, and no better. Whenever they exercise any selfish affection, they as really transgress the divine law, and fall under the divine displeasure, as if they never had possessed one gracious affection, or benevolent feeling. Such sentiments as these, which are founded on a dormant principle of grace, which is distinct from every gracious exercise, must appear entirely groundless, if love is the fulfilling of the law, and comprizes the whole duty of man.

5. Since love answers all the demands of the law, sinners have no excuse for not obeying any one of its precepts. God has furnished them with all the natural faculties, which are necessary in order to understand and perform their whole duty. And all that he requires of them is, to exercise true love or real benevolence to the extent of those natural powers, which they already possess. It is true, he requires them to make themselves a new heart; but the new heart, which he requires them to make, consists in love. It is true, he requires them to be perfect; but the perfection, which he requires them to have, consists in love. It is true, he requires them to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; but all this cleansing consists in love. It is true, he requires them to repent, to believe, to submit, and to deny themselves; but all the repentance, faith, submission, and self-denial, which he requires, consists in love. In a word, there is not a single duty enjoined upon sinners, but what true

love will perform. Hence, if they have no excuse for the want of that love, which the law requires, they can have no excuse for not yielding universal obedience to the divine commands.

6. If the law requires nothing but love; then it always approves itself to a very awakened and enlightened conscience. While sinners indulge themselves in carnal ease and security, they are ready to think and say, that God is a hard master, reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he had not strawed. But when their conscience is awakened to see, that God requires no heart, no inward exercise, no external action, but what consists in or flows from love, they feel the propriety and justice of every divine precept. Paul never felt the force of the divine law, until it was set home upon his conscience. Then he found it required nothing but benevolence, and condemned nothing but selfishness. This took away every excuse, and filled his conscience with guilt and remorse. He freely confesses, "I had not known lust, except the law had said, *Thou shalt not covet*—but when this commandment came, sin revived and I died." He felt himself justly condemned, for having always lived in the exercise of a *selfish*, instead of a *benevolent* spirit. And all awakened and convinced sinners have the same view of themselves. Their consciences compel them, in spite of their hearts, to acknowledge, that the law, which condemns them for all their past selfishness, and which requires them immediately to love God supremely, upon pain of eternal destruction, is perfectly holy, just and good.

7. If love is the fulfilling of the law, then nothing without love can fulfil it. 'Tis multitudes deny both in theory and in practice. The Scribes and Pharisees totally excluded love from the essence of obedience.

The Pharisee who went up to the temple to pray, placed all his obedience and hopes of divine acceptance in the mere externals of religion. The young man, who came to our Savior to know the way to eternal life, verily thought, that he had perfectly obeyed the law from his youth up, merely because he had never been guilty of any overt act of transgression. And Paul also while in a state of nature, and a perfect enemy to God, viewed himself, "as touching the law blameless." The same sentiment respecting the nature of true obedience still continues and prevails. Many imagine, that though they have not the love of God in them; yet by reading and praying; by attending public worship and divine ordinances; and by outward acts of justice, kindness and compassion, they can acceptably perform some part, if not the whole of their duty. But if love be the fulfilling of the law, then nothing done without love is the least obedience to the divine commands. This doctrine Christ abundantly taught in his sermon on the mount, and in the whole course of his preaching. Hear his severe and pointed reproofs to the Jewish Teachers, who separated obedience from love. "Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the *outside* of the cup, and of the platter, but *within* they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse *first* that which is *within* the cup and platter, that the *outside* of them may be clean also. Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres,

which indeed appear beautiful *outward*, but are *within* full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye *outwardly* appear righteous unto men, but *within* ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." The law of love requires nothing separate from love; and, therefore, no religious professions, no religious desires, no religious performances, which are separate from love, do in the least degree fulfil the law. Hence it is the first and immediate duty of sinners to exercise that love, which the law requires. They cannot perform a single duty without the exercise of love. They can neither repent nor believe, nor do any thing acceptable to God, until they renounce their enmity to him, and love him supremely. They must be reconciled to the law, before they can be reconciled to the gospel. They must love the law, before they can love the gospel, and embrace the offers of life; for saving faith worketh by love. Let every sinner, therefore, immediately obey the first and great commandment, and exercise that love, which alone will secure the favor and enjoyment of God. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."



## SERMON XII.

### THE PRIMITIVE RECTITUDE OF ADAM.

ECCLESIASTES vii, 29.

*Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright.*

IT is one mark of our universal depravity, that we have been so prone to reproach our common Progenitor. No parent, perhaps, has ever been treated with so little propriety and respect, as Adam. Some of his undutiful children have virtually charged him with all the sin and guilt in the world; while others have even ventured to call in question his moral purity and perfection, before his fall. But Solomon speaks of our first Parent with peculiar veneration; and represents him, in his primitive state, as far superior to any of his degenerate offspring. "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man *upright*; but they have sought out many inventions." These words naturally lead us to ascertain and support the primitive character of Adam.

Here let us first consider what we are to understand by his being made *upright*.

The true import of this term appears from the connexion in which it is used. Solomon is not speaking of that noble aspect and erect posture of Adam, by which he excelled the lower species; but of that *moral* rectitude, or integrity of heart, by which he excelled all his own posterity. For he tells us in the text and context, that after taking a serious and extensive view of mankind in their various situations and pursuits, he

drew up this general conclusion in his own mind, that the human race had greatly degenerated from the moral purity and integrity of their first Parent, and employed all their noble powers to find out new and different ways of gratifying their extremely depraved hearts. The inspired Writers commonly use the term *upright*, to signify that quality of the heart, which forms the highest beauty and perfection of human nature. We read, "The Levites were more *upright in heart* than the Priests." Solomon, speaking of the integrity of his father David, says, "he walked before God in *uprightness of heart*." And David commonly makes use of this phrase, when he would express his own integrity, or the integrity of others. "I will praise thee with *uprightness of heart*. My defence is of God, who saveth the *upright in heart*. The wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrows upon the string; that they may privily shoot at the *upright in heart*. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are *upright in heart*. O continue thy loving kindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the *upright in heart*. The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him: and all the *upright in heart* shall glory. Judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the *upright in heart* shall follow it. Light is sown for the righteous; and gladness for the *upright in heart*. Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good, and to them that are *upright in heart*." It appears from these passages of Scripture, that uprightness belongs to the heart, and gives a man his moral character. And this leads us to understand the term *upright* in the text, as denoting moral rectitude, or perfect holiness.

The way is now prepared to show, in the second place, that God did make the first man *upright* in this

sense of the word. We are now come upon disputed ground, which requires us to proceed with great caution and perspicuity. And, therefore, it may be proper to observe,

1. That God *might have made Adam upright in heart.*

This is denied by many men of great learning and ingenuity. They suppose it was beyond the power of the Deity, to make man *morally* upright, or create him in righteousness and true holiness. This is the opinion of two very ingenious and respectable authors, who have expressed their minds freely upon the subject. Doctor Taylor confidently asserts, "That it is utterly inconsistent with the nature of virtue, that it should be concreated with any person; because, if so, it must be an act of God's absolute power, without our knowledge or concurrence; and that moral virtue, in its very nature, implieth the choice and consent of the moral agent, without which it cannot be virtue and holiness: that *necessary* holiness is no holiness. To say that God not only endowed Adam with a capacity of being righteous, but moreover that righteousness and true holiness were created with him, or wrought into his nature, at the same time he was made, is to affirm a contradiction, or what is inconsistent with the nature of righteousness." Doctor Chauncey agrees very nearly with Doctor Taylor; for speaking upon this subject, he says, with his usual elegance and accuracy, "That man was made male and female, the most excellent creature in this lower world, possessing the highest and noblest rank: That he was made by an "immediate" exertion of almighty power, and not by God's agency, in concurrence with second causes, operating according to an established course or order; that he was made in the "image of God;" mean-

ing hereby, not an *actual, present, perfect* likeness to him, either in knowledge, wisdom, holiness, or happiness, but with **IMPLANTED POWERS** perfectly adjusted for his *gradually* attaining to his *likeness*, in the highest measure proper to a being of his rank in the creation." Though Doctor Chauncey does not expressly deny, as Doctor Taylor does, the possibility of God's making man upright, yet his mode of treating the subject plainly implies it. They both suppose, that virtue or true holiness must be the sole work of man, and of course suppose, that it is impossible, in the nature of things, that it should be the work of God. This is the objection against God's creating Adam in righteousness and true holiness, set in the fairest and strongest light. Let us now consider what there is to invalidate this objection, and to make it appear, that God *might have made man upright*.

And here I may observe, in the first place, that it is *agreeable* to the *nature* of virtue, or true holiness to be *created*. The volitions or moral exercises of the mind are virtuous or vicious, *in their own nature*, without the least regard to the *cause* by which they were produced. This is apparent, upon the principles of those, who deny the possibility of *created* holiness. Doctor Taylor pleads, that holiness consists in the free, voluntary choice of the agent. This is undoubtedly true, and agreeable to the dictates of common sense. But if this be true, the excellency of virtue or holiness consists in its *nature*, and *not* in its *cause*. For, if there cannot be a volition before the first volition; then the first volition of every created agent, must have a *cause altogether involuntary*. This must certainly have been the case with respect to Adam. His *first* volition could not proceed from a *previous* volition; and therefore his first volition proceeded from some *involuntary*

cause. And if it proceeded from an *involuntary* cause, it matters not whether that cause was within or without himself. For, if it were *altogether involuntary*, there could be no moral goodness in it; since it is granted by all, that virtue or true holiness consists in the free choice, or voluntary exercise of the agent. So that if Adam ever *began* to be holy, his first holiness consisted in *his first benevolent volition*, and *not in the cause of that first virtuous and voluntary exercise*. But if his first holiness consisted in his first benevolent volition; then it *might have been* created or produced by the Deity, without destroying its *benevolent and virtuous* nature.

I may further observe, that holiness is something which has a real and positive existence, and which not only *may*, but *must be created*. The free, voluntary exercises of the mind can no more come into existence without a cause, than any other objects in nature. And it is equally certain that Adam could not be the efficient cause of his own volition. He was a *dependent* creature. He lived and moved, and had his being in God, and without him he could do nothing. Such a *dependent* creature could no more produce his own volitions, than his own existence. A self-determining power is an independent power, which never was, and never could be given to Adam. And if he never had a power of originating his own volitions, or making himself holy; then he must have forever remained without holiness, unless God had seen fit to make him holy, or morally upright.

And this, I proceed to observe, he might have done. He has the power of production. He can create, or bring out of nothing into existence whatever he pleases. His power is absolutely unlimited and irresistible. As he can create a body, and create a soul, which are

lower kinds of existence; so he can create virtue or true holiness, which is the highest and noblest kind of existence. But we have no occasion to employ fine spun reasoning to prove, that holiness comes within the sphere of divine agency, since the Scriptures clearly decide this point. They ascribe the production of holiness to God, as his own proper and peculiar work. They assure us, that he can give men a *heart* to know him; that he can *make them willing* to submit to him; that he can *take away their stony hearts*, and *give them hearts of flesh*; that he can *create them anew* in Christ Jesus *unto good works*; that he can *work* in them both *to will* and *to do* of his good pleasure; or in a word, that he can *harden*, or *soften*, or *turn* their hearts, just as he pleases. There is not a plainer truth in the Bible than this; that God can make men *upright*. And if he can make obstinate and hardened sinners *upright*; who can doubt whether he was able to make the first man, in the first stage of his existence, *upright*?

We may now advance another step, and observe,

2. That God not only *might*, but *must* have created Adam either *holy*, or *unholy*.

Adam was created in a state of manhood. His body was completely organized, and every way fitted for the reception of the soul. At the instant, therefore, in which his soul was united with his body, he became a perfect man, or moral agent. There was nothing further necessary in order to the exercise of his moral powers, but the exhibition of external objects. And these were exhibited before him, as soon as he opened his eyes upon the visible world. It is possible, though not probable, that his first views were somewhat obscure and confused, like those of a man who awakes out of a sound sleep. But as soon, and perhaps much

sooner, than a waking man collects his thoughts, Adam collected his, and saw and felt the influence of surrounding objects, with all the clearness and sensibility that he ever did in his life. The power of perception sets all the other powers of his mind into motion. So that there could be no discernible distance of time between his *seeing* objects, and *feeling* moral affections towards them. As his completely organized body could not prevent the exercise of his moral powers; so there was nothing within, nor without him, that could prevent his immediately commencing a moral agent, and exercising either holy or unholy affections.

To suppose that God *implanted* in his mind the principles of moral agency, without making him a moral agent, is extremely absurd. For, if God gave him the powers of perception, reason and conscience, he must have been immediately under *moral obligation*, which he must have immediately either fulfilled, or violated, and so have immediately become either holy, or sinful. To avoid this conclusion, Doctor Chauncey says, "these *implanted* powers did not afford Adam any *present, actual* knowledge, wisdom, holiness, or happiness." I ask then, what they did afford him? or in what sense they were the powers of moral agency, when they neither enabled him to *perceive* any object, to *know* any truth, to *enjoy* any good, nor to *do* any action? Upon this supposition, Adam was as inactive and torpid, after his soul was united to his body, as before; and might have remained in that inactive, torpid state forever, notwithstanding his *implanted* powers. For, if after his soul and body were united, he might have remained destitute of sensation and perception, one moment; he might have remained so, one hour, one day, one year, or to all eternity. If any person can tell how Adam began

to perceive, to love or hate, to choose or refuse, in any period of his life; he can as easily tell how Adam began to perceive, to love and hate, to choose and refuse, the *first moment*, in which his soul was united to his body. If ever his implanted powers could constitute him a moral agent, they must have made him a moral agent, in that very instant, in which God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul. The Apostle tells us, "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." It was impossible, therefore, that God should make the soul of Adam like a clean piece of paper, and preserve it so, a single moment, after he had given him the power of *perception*. For, as soon as he *perceived* any object, he must have had some *moral* exercise towards it, which would have stamped his character either as virtuous, or vicious. Hence it is clearly evident, that Adam was created either sinful, or holy; and since none pretend, that he was created sinful, all must allow, that he was made *upright*, agreeably to the declaration in the text.

I go on to observe,

3. That it appears from the account, which Moses gives of the creation of Adam, that God made him *upright*. We have this account in Genesis i, 26, 27. "And God said, Let us make man *in our image, after our likeness*: and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man *in his own image, in the image of God* created he him: male and female created he them." Some suppose, this divine image consisted in the exterior glory of Adam's body, which resembled the exterior glory of the great Mediator, before he appeared in the



form of a servant, and tabernacled in flesh. But, perhaps, there is no just foundation for this opinion.

Others suppose, this divine image consisted in the superior intellectual powers of Adam, by which he excelled all the inferior creation, and resembled the *natural* perfections of his Maker. There is, indeed, some truth in this supposition. The human understanding does bear some resemblance of the divine intelligence. And in this respect, men still bear the *natural* image of God's *natural* perfections. Hence we are told since the flood, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man."

But there is still a higher sense, in which man might have borne the image of his Maker; and that is, in respect to his *righteousness*, or *true holiness*. God hath a *moral* as well as *natural* character; or he hath *moral* as well as *natural* perfections. Adam, therefore, might have resembled him in his *moral* as well as his *natural* attributes. Adam's *heart* might have resembled the *heart* of the Deity, as much as his *understanding* resembled the divine *understanding*. And since God designed to make man resemble himself, it is most natural to suppose, that he would make him resemble himself, in the highest and noblest point of resemblance, that is, in his holiness or moral excellence. This reasonable supposition we find to be scriptural. For, we are assured, that God did make Adam a man *after his own heart*, or in his *moral* image, by the Apostle Paul, who explains the image of God in man, in this noble and important sense. To the Ephesians he says, "Put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the *new man*, which *after*

*God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*” And he represents the Colossians as actually bearing this *moral* image of their Maker. “Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the *new man*, which is renewed in knowledge *after the image of him that created him.*” It appears from these passages, that the image of God in saints consists in moral rectitude, or uprightness of heart. If we allow Scripture to explain itself, we must conclude, that God made Adam holy and upright. For we are told by one inspired Writer, that God made man in *his own image*, and after *his own likeness*; and by another, that the image and likeness of God in men, consists in *knowledge, righteousness and true holiness.*

We may observe once more,

4. That the history of Adam, from the time of his creation to the time of his eating the forbidden fruit, affords a clear and convincing evidence of his being originally formed in the moral image of his Maker. We are told, that, after God formed man the last of his works, “he saw every thing that he had made, and behold, *it was very good.*” But how could man, who was a moral agent, *be very good*, unless *his heart*, or moral character, was pure and holy? Had he been destitute of virtue, or true holiness, he must have appeared extremely *odious* in the eyes of perfect purity. We are told, that God blessed Adam; that he gave him dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowls of the air, and over every living creature; that he gave him the free use of all the fruits of the earth, and of all the trees of the garden, except one; and that to crown all his other earthly blessings, he provided a help meet for him, who was bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, the companion of his life, and the promoter and partner of all his felicity. While God bestowed these fa-

feited all good, and exposed himself to all evil. The moment he sinned, he found himself completely ruined. His situation was extremely distressing. How could he look back, and recal his past hours of peace and sweet enjoyment? Or how could he look forward, and anticipate the scenes of endless darkness and despair? If Esau could not endure the loss of his birth-right, how could Adam endure the loss of a temporal and eternal Paradise? This deep sense of misery, was attended with a deeper sense of guilt. He knew that he had destroyed himself, by his own voluntary disobedience. His conscience reproached and condemned him, for injuring the greatest and best of Beings. Guilt and fear tormented his breast; shame and confusion covered his face. He dreaded the appearance and frowns of Him, whose presence and smiles he once enjoyed. He attempted to hide his guilty head from the face of his Maker; but neither trees, nor rocks, nor mountains could screen him from the eye and hand of his Judge. That awful and sovereign voice which cried, *Adam! where art thou?* brought him trembling and despairing before the supreme tribunal, where he expected to receive the due reward of his deeds. Such a scene must have been extremely solemn. Our fallen Father must have viewed himself, and must have been viewed by all created beings, as irrecoverably lost. There was not the least gleam of hope in his case. Hence,

5. It was an act of astonishing grace in God to provide a Savior for fallen man. He had deserved and expected to die. God might have justly treated him, as he had treated fallen angels, and doomed him to a state of endless ruin. But instead of giving him up into the hands of his tempter and destroyer; he graciously assured him, that "the seed of the woman

should bruise the serpent's head." This was the greatest and most unexpected display of divine grace, that God ever made to any of his creatures. And though the situation of Adam prepared him to have a high sense of the grace of God, in providing a Savior for himself; yet he had but a faint and low conception of the richness and fulness of the first promise, as it respected his numerous posterity. The promise of a divine redeemer contained good enough, to counterbalance all the natural and moral evils of the fall, and in that way, to defeat and disconcert all the malignant designs of Satan. God intended, by saving men, through the mediation of Christ, to make the universe more holy and happy, than if Satan had never introduced either natural or moral evil into it. And, therefore, though sin and misery have abounded, through the fall of man; yet holiness and happiness shall much more abound, through his recovery, by Jesus Christ.

6. Those who have recovered the moral image and favor of their Maker, which Adam forfeited and lost, are in a much more safe and happy situation than he was, even before the fall. Adam held all his holiness and happiness, by an uncertain tenure; but saints have built their hopes upon better promises. Adam was to be completely holy and happy, on the condition of persevering obedience; but saints are secured in holiness and happiness forever, upon the first holy and virtuous exercise. Adam had no promise of persevering grace; but saints have the promise of divine aid and influence, to carry them through all the duties and dangers of their probationary state. Adam had the hopeful prospect of perpetually enjoying the blessings of divine *goodness*; but saints have assurance of perpetually enjoying the blessings of divine *grace*. Adam might expect to be but a little lower than the angels

in divine enjoyments; but saints may hope to rise above those exalted spirits, in pure and permanent felicity, and to sing a new song, which none but the redeemed from among men will ever be able to learn.

7. Since the primitive glory and felicity of Adam resulted from his bearing the image and enjoying the favor of God, it is certain that none of his posterity can rise to true greatness and real happiness, until they put off the *old man*, and put on the *new*. The most shining talents, the most rich inheritance, and the most amiable accomplishments, can never supply the want of the divine image and favor, in any of the children of men. The sinner, with all his boasted attainments, appears to the eye of God a mean, vile, contemptible being. Every son of Adam must be conformed to the moral image of his Maker, in order to be a truly respectable and happy man. This subject, therefore, calls upon all sinners, without distinction, to be holy as God is holy, and perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect, in order to attain the highest dignity of their nature, and the chief end of their being. Remember this, O ye transgressors, and shew yourselves men.

## SERMON XIII.

ON ORIGINAL SIN.

ROMANS v, 19.

*By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners.*

THE Apostle undertakes, in this Epistle, to lay open the gospel scheme of salvation. In the prosecution of this purpose, he proves, that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, and justly exposed to suffer the curse of the divine law. He next brings into view the atonement of Christ, as the only foundation of pardon and acceptance with God. This leads him to state the doctrine of justification, through faith in the divine Mediator. But lest some should stumble at the idea of the sinner's being saved on account of his substitute; he proceeds, in this chapter, to illustrate the matter by a similar and well known instance. He says, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." He takes it for granted, that the christians to whom he is writing believed, that Adam stood as the public head of his posterity, and so by his first offence exposed them to both sin and death. And this being taken for granted, he goes on to illustrate the *saving* influence of Christ's *mediatorial* conduct, by the *destructive* influence of Adam's *probationary* conduct. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." The text, taken either in this connexion, or as an independent sentence, naturally leads us to consider the fatal influence of Adam's first offence, upon all his natural posterity. This is an im-

portant subject; and in order to place it in as clear a light as I am able, I shall,

I. Show, that all men are sinners.

II. Show, that Adam made them sinners.

III. Show, *how* Adam made them sinners.

IV. Show, *why* God ordered it so that Adam should make them sinners.

I. I am to show, that all men are sinners.

This melancholy truth has been universally acknowledged. All nations have perceived and lamented the moral corruption of human nature. The ancient Poets, who have painted the *moral characters* of men, and the ancient Historians, who have recorded their *moral conduct*, unite in exhibiting plain and incontestible evidence of human depravity. We cannot find, in all antiquity, one *sinless* nation, nor one *sinless* person. Human nature has been the same, wherever planted and however cultivated, in every age and in every part of the world. Though mankind have spread far and wide over the face of the earth, and lived under the influence of different climates, of different laws, and of different religions; yet they have universally discovered the same corruption of heart.

The truth of this account is fully confirmed, by the express declarations of Scripture. We read, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." We read, "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not." Job demands, "What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" David confesses before God, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." And under this impression he

prays, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no flesh be justified." Solomon puts the question to every child of Adam, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" And after a critical and extensive view of mankind, he observes, "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." The Apostle Paul is still more plain and particular upon this point. "What then" says he, "are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are *all* under sin; as it is written, There is *none* righteous, no, not *one*. There is *none* that understandeth, there is *none* that seeketh after God, they are *all* gone out of the way, they are *together* become unprofitable: There is *none* that doeth good, no, not *one*. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their way. And the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes." These divine declarations, in concurrence with universal observation and experience, clearly demonstrate, that all men, without a single exception, are sinners. The next thing is,

II. To show that we became sinners, by Adam. The moral corruption of human nature is of great antiquity. The oldest heathen Writers could not, by the light of nature, nor tradition, trace it back to its original source. They generally supposed, however, that man had actually *degenerated* from his primitive purity. They were loth to believe, that he came out of the forming hand of his Maker, with a corrupt heart. But we have no occasion for conjectures on



this subject. The Scripture acquaints us with the original rectitude, and first apostasy, of the human race. The Apostle ascribes the universal sinfulness and mortality of mankind to the first offence of the first man, Adam. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed where there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. Therefore, by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; for by one man's disobedience many were made sinners." The one offence of Adam, which the Apostle here so often mentions, and which he represents as so fatal to mankind, was the offence of his eating the forbidden fruit; of which we have a particular account in the third chapter of Genesis. And he expressly declares, that that single act of our first Parent, introduced sin and death among all his natural descendants, from generation to generation. I proceed,

III. To show *how* we became sinners by Adam. The text says, that "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners." This plainly implies, that Adam's first offence was, some way or other, the occasion of the universal sinfulness of his future offspring. And the question now before us is, how his sin was the occasion of ours. This is the most difficult branch of our subject; and in order to proceed upon plain and sure ground, I would observe,

1. That Adam did not make us sinners, by causing us to commit his first offence. His first offence, we know, was his eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And since he committed that transgression

before we were born, it is a plain dictate of common sense, that we had no concern in it. We could no more eat of the forbidden fruit, before we were born, than Adam could have eaten of it, before he was created. And though we have been guilty of many and great offences; yet we are all conscious, that we never sinned with our first Parent, in his first transgression. Neither our reason nor experience, therefore, will allow us to believe, that Adam made men sinners, by causing them to eat of the forbidden fruit, which they never saw, in a place where they never were, and at a time before they existed.

Nor can we more easily believe,

2. That he made his posterity sinners, by *transferring* to them the *guilt* of his first transgression. Guilt is a personal thing, which belongs to him alone, who does a sinful action. The guilt of any action can no more be transferred from the agent to another person, than the action itself. It has just been observed, that Adam could not transfer his first act of disobedience to his posterity; and if he could not transfer the act itself, it is equally evident, that he could not transfer the *guilt* of it. As he could not have made himself *guilty* of eating the forbidden fruit, *without his choosing* to eat of it; so he could not make his posterity *guilty* of eating of the forbidden fruit, *without their choosing* to do the same action. But we know, that he never made them *choose* to commit his first sin; and, therefore, he could not bring them under the *guilt* of his first transgression. It was as much out of the power of Adam, to *transfer* his own personal guilt to his posterity, as it is now out of the power of any other parent, to *transfer* his own personal guilt to his children. So far we all have clear and distinct ideas upon this subject.

But here some may say, Though Adam himself could not *transfer* the guilt of his first offence to his posterity; yet God, who is a Sovereign, might *transfer* the *guilt* of that sin to all his descendants. It is true, indeed, that God is a Sovereign, and hath a right to act as a Sovereign, in governing all his creatures and all their actions. But may we suppose, that his sovereignty allows him to do injustice, or treat any moral agents contrary to the eternal rule of right? It was unjust, in the nature of things, that the Supreme Being should *transfer* the *guilt* of Adam's sin to his posterity. And no constitution which he could make could render such a mode of conduct consistent with his moral rectitude. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Shall he, therefore, transfer the guilt of the father to the son? or shall he punish the son for the father's sin? No, the soul that sinneth, it shall die for its own iniquity. God has a sovereign right, to transfer a favor from one person to another; but it is beyond the province of his Sovereignty, to transfer the *guilt* of an action from the proper agent, to an innocent person. His Sovereignty is limited by his Justice, in his treatment of moral and accountable creatures. Hence we may safely conclude, that the *guilt* of Adam's first sin was never *transferred* from him to his posterity, by the authority, or appointment of God.

Some, however, may still further ask, Does not the Scripture speak of *Imputation*? and does not imputation suppose, that God may, and does, *transfer* both righteousness and unrighteousness, from one person to another?

Though the Scripture speaks of good and bad actions being *imputed*, yet it never speaks of their being *transferred*. This will appear, if we consider the Scripture account of *imputation*. According to Scrip-

ture, a man's own actions are imputed to *himself*, when he receives the due reward of his deeds. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted, or *imputed*, to him for righteousness." That is, he was rewarded for his own virtue, or received the benefit of his own goodness. Shimei, who had deserved to die for cursing David, came to him and said, "Let not my lord *impute* iniquity unto me." That is, let me not suffer the just consequence of my own personal criminality. Thus men's own actions are imputed to *themselves*, when they receive the good or evil, which their actions deserve. And according to Scripture, the actions of one man are *imputed* to another, when one man receives benefit, or suffers evil on account of another's conduct. David *imputed* the virtue of Jonathan to his son, when he shewed kindness to the son, for the father's sake. And God *imputed* the iniquities of the fathers to the children, when he made the children of Korah, Dathan and Abiram suffer, in consequence of their father's rebellion. But it is here to be observed, that in these instances of *imputation*, there is no *transferring* of righteousness or unrighteousness, from one person to another. The *virtue* of Jonathan was not *transferred* to Mephibosheth; nor the *guilt* of Korah to his children. But the *virtue* of Jonathan rendered it *proper* for David to shew *kindness* to Mephibosheth; and the *guilt* of Korah rendered it proper for God to shew his displeasure at *him*, by punishing his children according to *their own* desert. This is the true and proper idea of *imputation*. And in this sense of the word, it is granted, that God does *impute* the first sin of Adam to his posterity. Accordingly we read in the context. "By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation." But though both sin and death come upon us in conse-

quence of Adam's first sin; yet that sin is not *transferred* to us, nor are we *punished* for it. The doctrine of imputation, therefore, gives us no ground to suppose, that all mankind sinned in and fell with Adam, in his first transgression; or that the *guilt* of his first sin was, either by him, or by the Deity, *transferred* to his posterity. Nor can we suppose,

3. That Adam made men sinners, by conveying to them a *morally corrupt nature*. *Moral* corruption is essentially different from *natural* corruption. The latter belongs to the body, but the former belongs to the mind. Adam undoubtedly conveyed to his posterity, a corrupt body, or a body subject to wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores. But such a body could not corrupt the mind, or render it *morally depraved*. There is no *morally* corrupt nature, distinct from free, voluntary, sinful exercises. Adam had no such nature, and therefore could convey no such nature to his posterity. But even supposing, that he really had a *morally* corrupt nature, distinct from his free, voluntary, sinful exercises; it must have belonged to his soul, and not to his body. And if it belonged to his soul, he could not convey it to his posterity, who derive their souls immediately from the fountain of Being. God is the father of our spirits. The soul is not transmitted from father to son, by natural generation. The soul is spiritual; and what is spiritual is indivisible; and what is indivisible is incapable of propagation. Adam could not convey any part of his soul to his next immediate offspring, without conveying the whole. It is, therefore, as contrary to philosophy as to Scripture, to suppose, that Adam's posterity derive their souls from him. And if they did not derive their souls from him, they could not derive from

him a morally corrupt nature, if he really possessed such a nature himself.

Besides, the Scripture puts this matter out of doubt. For the Apostle repeatedly observes, it was by *one* offence of Adam, that his posterity became sinners. He calls it *the* offence; *one* man's offence; the offence of *one*; *one* man's disobedience. It was Adam's first offence of eating the forbidden fruit, that ruined his posterity. But how could that first offence convey a morally corrupt nature to those who did not exist, when it was actually committed? If Adam's first act of disobedience did not convey a corrupt nature to his posterity, at the very moment when it was committed, it never could convey such a nature to them afterwards. And no one ever supposed, that his first transgression *immediately affected and polluted* his posterity, who had then no existence. It is utterly inconceivable, therefore, that Adam should transmit a corrupt nature to his future offspring, by his *first act* of disobedience.

But if Adam conveyed neither sin, nor guilt, nor moral depravity to his descendants, by his first transgression, how then did that act of disobedience make them sinners?

The only proper and direct answer to this question is, that God placed Adam as the public Head of his posterity, and determined to treat *them* according to *his* conduct. If he persevered in holiness and obedience, God determined to bring his posterity into existence holy and upright. But if he sinned and fell, God determined to bring his posterity into existence morally corrupt or depraved. Adam disobeyed the law of his Maker; and according to the constitution under which he was placed, his first and single act of

disobedience made all his posterity sinners; that is, it proved the occasion of their coming into the world unholy and sinful. By constituting Adam the public Head of his posterity, God suspended *their* holiness and sinfulness upon *his* conduct. So that *his* holiness would constitutionally render *them* holy; and *his* sinfulness would constitutionally render *them* unholy or depraved. And this is the very idea, which our text originally and clearly conveys. "By one man's disobedience many were CONSTITUTED sinners." The word translated *made* ought to have been rendered *constituted*. Adam did not create or make his posterity sinners, but only *constituted* them such. His eating of the forbidden fruit violated that constitution, which would otherwise have secured the holiness of all mankind. By his first transgression, therefore, he proved the *occasion* of God's bringing all his posterity into the world in a state of moral depravity. And in that way, and in that sense only, he made them sinners. It remains to show,

IV. Why God constituted such a connexion between Adam and his posterity. The question is not, why God determined, that Adam and his posterity should eventually become sinners; but why he brought about this event, by placing Adam in a state of probation, and suspending the moral character of his posterity upon *his* conduct, in his public capacity. We can easily see, that God might have ordered the matter otherwise. He might have *first* made Adam sinful, and *afterwards* made his posterity like him, without forming any connexion between *his moral* character and *theirs*. Why then did he not take this short and direct method, without *first* making Adam holy, and *then* placing him in a situation, in which he

meant he should fall, and by falling, involve all his posterity in sin and ruin?

To this it does not appear proper to answer as many do, that God made Adam holy, put him into a state of probation, and constituted him the public Head of his posterity, because it was more for *his* benefit and *theirs*, that he should be placed in such a public capacity. It is more natural to conclude, that if God had meant to consult the particular benefit of mankind, he would have confirmed Adam in holiness, immediately upon his creation, and so have secured both *his* and *their* future holiness and happiness. We may reasonably suppose, that God acted upon a broader scale, than the particular good of Adam, or his posterity; and had a superior regard to his own glory, and the general good of the whole created universe. But though this was the general reason why God placed Adam in a state of probation, and at the head of his posterity; yet several particular reasons, for this part of the divine conduct, may be suggested.

1. There was a propriety in trying human nature, before it became corrupt. There is nothing better calculated to impress upon the minds of intelligent creatures a deep and lasting sense of their absolute dependence, than to be put into a state of trial. For this purpose, God tried the angels before their revolt. And for the same purpose, he saw fit to try Adam before he fell. Accordingly, in the first instance, he made him upright, and put him into a state of probation; where he had a fair opportunity of confirming, or of losing his original rectitude. And though God intended that both he and his posterity should eventually become sinful; yet, by this mode of conduct, he meant to convince both him and them, of their absolute dependence upon his sovereign will, for the



bestowment and continuance of his moral image.  
For,

2. By placing Adam, while perfectly holy, in a state of probation, God answered the same purpose that would have been answered, by placing all his posterity in the same situation. By trying Adam, he virtually tried the whole human race. For Adam was as able and as likely to stand, as any of his posterity would have been, had they been personally placed in similar circumstances. He was under the best advantages of standing the test of obedience, and of securing the everlasting approbation of his Maker. He was created in a state of manhood, and all his natural and moral powers were in their full vigor. He was capable of seeing the importance, and of feeling the obligations he was under, of yielding perfect and perpetual obedience to the divine will. In these respects, he stood upon higher ground, than any of his descendants could have stood, when they came into existence. So that they have no reason to imagine, that they should have stood the trial any better, than their first Parent. His trial was a fair trial of human nature in its best estate. And since the first and best of men sinned and fell; all his posterity have sufficient evidence of being absolutely dependent upon God, without whose special influence, they can neither become, nor continue holy and happy. Besides,

3. By trying Adam singly and in the room of his posterity, God prepared the way to bring the Savior of the world into view, immediately after the fall. It would have appeared strange to Adam, and equally strange to his posterity from time to time, if God had provided a Savior for *all* mankind, before it was made certain, that all would become sinners, and stand in need of a Savior. But by making Adam a public

Head of his posterity, and connecting *their* moral character with *his*, God ascertained *their* future sinfulness, by *his* first offence. For as soon as Adam needed a Savior, it became absolutely certain, that *all* his posterity would need one. This would not have appeared, had each individual of mankind stood for himself, as each individual of the angels did. One reason, therefore, why God placed Adam as the public head of his posterity, and suspended *their* moral character upon a single instance of *his* conduct, was because he intended to provide a Savior for him and all his guilty race. This he did not intend to do for the angels after their fall; and, therefore, he placed each individual in a state of trial, to stand or fall for himself, without suspending the fate of *all*, upon the conduct of *one*. We barely suggest these reasons for God's constituting Adam the public Head of his posterity. For whether they are sufficient or insufficient to account for this instance of his conduct, is not very material; since neither our duty nor salvation depends upon being able to clear it up. It is hoped, however, that what has been hinted, may serve to remove some darkness and prejudice from the minds of those, who have been much perplexed upon this subject.

## IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from the leading sentiments in this discourse, that Adam was the only person who committed, and who was guilty, of *original sin*. This phrase has been used to signify not only the sin of Adam, but the sin of Eve, and the sin of every one of their numerous posterity. It is true, indeed, that Eve committed a *first sin*; and it is equally true, that every other person has committed a *first sin*. But a sin's being the *first* that a person ever committed, does not properly denominate it an *original sin*. Each angel that fell com-

mitted a *first* sin; but that *first* sin has never been called; nor considered to be, an *original* sin. This phrase is properly applicable to no other sin, than that of Adam's eating the forbidden fruit. And that sin is properly called *original*, not because it was the *first* ever committed in this world, for Eve was first in transgression; nor simply because it was the *first* sin of the *first* man; but because it was that particular sin, upon which the moral character of all mankind was *constitutionally* suspended. According to the divine constitution, that sin alone was the *occasion* of all the future sinfulness of Adam, and Eve, and their whole posterity.

And since it is improper to call any sin *original* sin; but that *first* sin of Adam; it is equally improper to say, that any person ever *committed*, or was *guilty* of *original* sin, but the first man Adam. Though all men *begin* to sin, in consequence of *original* sin; yet their *beginning to sin*, is neither eating the forbidden fruit, nor consenting to eat it, nor doing any thing else, which resembles the *first* sin of Adam, any more than the *first* sin of any other man. The act and guilt of Adam's first transgression were his own, and never transferred to us. He committed and was guilty of *original* sin, and he alone. Though we have committed a multitude of *other* sins; yet we never committed *that* sin, nor stand in the least degree chargeable with it. To say, therefore, that all mankind are *guilty* of Adam's first transgression, is extremely absurd, and naturally tends to prejudice the minds of many against the true doctrine of *original* sin.

2. We learn from what has been said, that the true doctrine of *original sin* is clearly revealed in the Bible. This has often been called in question. Some suppose, if such an important doctrine were true, it

would have been much more frequently mentioned, and much more clearly revealed in Scripture. They imagine, there is no trait of it to be found, after the third chapter of Genesis, until we come to this Epistle to the Romans, which is extremely obscure and hard to be understood. It is readily granted, that the idea, which some have formed of original sin, is nowhere revealed in the Bible. But that idea of it, which has been exhibited in this discourse, and which we conceive to be the only true idea, appears to run through all the books of the Old and New Testament. Upon the first offence of our first Parents, we read of God's providing a Savior, not only for them, but for their future posterity. Immediately after this, we find sacrifices were appointed, to prefigure a suffering Savior, and, through him, the pardoning mercy of God to all penitent sinners. Under the Law, circumcision was instituted, which plainly represented the native depravity of the human heart. This doctrine was uniformly taught by all the sacred Writers from Moses to Malachi. John the Baptist and Christ himself plainly and pointedly preached the same sentiment. Christ instituted the ordinance of Baptism, which signifies the "washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." Paul represents Adam and Christ as two public Heads of mankind; and plainly declares, that we became sinners, by the disobedience of the former, and may be saved from ruin, by the obedience of the latter: Christ is represented, in the New Testament, as the Savior provided for both Jews and Gentiles; and is expressly said to be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. And the predictions concerning the future spread of the gospel, and the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom, carry the idea, that mankind will all be sinful, and need a Savior to

the end of time. In such a great variety of ways, is the *constituted connexion* between the first sin of Adam and the sinfulness of all mankind to the latest posterity, clearly revealed in the Bible. Neither the promises concerning the coming of Christ; nor the declarations concerning his design in coming; nor the descriptions of his sufferings and death; nor the positive institutions of the gospel, can be accounted for on any other ground, than that of Original sin. This doctrine lies at the foundation of all revealed religion; and to deny it, is virtually to deny the whole of divine Revelation. For if it had not been for the original sin of the *first* Man, there would have been no occasion for the sufferings and death of the *second* Man, who is the Lord from heaven.

3. There is no ground to suppose, from any thing which has been said in this discourse, that Adam knew, before the fall, that he was the public head of his posterity; or that *his* conduct should determine the *moral* state, in which they should come into existence. The divine prohibition and threatening were sufficient to acquaint him with his duty, and lay him under obligation to perform it. There appears to have been no more occasion for his knowing, that *his sin* would destroy his posterity; than for his knowing, that a divine Redeemer would come into the world to save them. God constituted the connexion between him and his posterity, to regulate *his own* conduct, and to accomplish *his own* designs. And he might see a great impropriety, in acquainting him with his public capacity, before his first transgression. Our Savior concealed the knowledge of his character and sufferings, for a long time after he entered upon his public ministry, lest this knowledge should either retard or accelerate the event of his death. And God might foresee, that

it would frustrate his own designs, if he acquainted Adam with his public capacity, before he had actually involved himself and his posterity in ruin. Accordingly we find the first prohibition and threatening were directed to him personally. God says, "In the day *thou* eatest thereof, *thou* shalt surely die." If we now search the Bible from beginning to end, we shall discover no intimation, that God informed Adam of his being placed as the public Head of his posterity, before he actually sinned, and exposed them all to the fatal effects of his first transgression. And since the Scriptures are entirely silent upon this point, it is by no means proper to take it for granted, and to reason from it as an established truth.

4. It appears from what has been said in this discourse, that God did no *injustice* to mankind, in appointing Adam their public Head. They have often complained of the injustice of God, on this account. But they never had the least foundation for this general complaint. It appears from what has been said, that the constituted connexion between Adam and his posterity, neither made *his sin their sin*; nor *his guilt their guilt*; nor exposed *them* to the least degree of *punishment*, on *his* account. There could be no injustice, therefore, in God's appointing Adam the public Head of his posterity. It is presumed, the general complaint of injustice has originated entirely from a false idea of the divine constitution, under which Adam was placed. God made that constitution to regulate *his own* conduct; and not to regulate the conduct of either Adam or his posterity. It was Adam's duty to obey the divine prohibition, whether he stood in a public or private capacity. And it is our duty to obey all the divine commands, notwithstanding his constituted relation to and connexion with us. The truth

is, there was neither *justice*, nor *injustice*, in God's appointing Adam our public Head. It was an act of mere Sovereignty. God, as a Sovereign, had as good a right, to make Adam the public Head of his posterity, as he had to make him at all, or to place him in the garden of Eden, or to determine a single circumstance of his life. And, as a Sovereign, he had as good a right to determine that his posterity should be sinners, in consequence of his first offence, as he had, to determine their numbers, their natural abilities, their outward circumstances, and their final state. There is neither justice, nor injustice, in God's determining what the moral characters of moral agents shall be; though there may be justice, or injustice, in his conduct towards them, after their moral characters are formed. The constitution, which connected Adam's sin with the sin of his posterity, was such a constitution as God had an original and sovereign right to make. For if he had a right to bring us into existence, he had an equal right to determine *how* he would bring us into existence, whether as single, detached individuals, like the angels; or as naturally and constitutionally connected with our first and great Progenitor. And since God had a sovereign right to place us under such a constitution, we have no right to call it unwise, unjust, or unkind.

5. It appears from what has been said, that our first Parent laid us under no necessity of sinning. If he had transmitted to us a *corrupt nature*, or a *sinful principle*, we might have had some ground to suppose, that we were *obliged* to sin, by the fatal influence of his first transgression. But since that sin neither directly nor indirectly ever affected either our natural or moral faculties; it is certain, that we act as freely and voluntary in committing sin, as we could have done,

if Adam had never sinned, nor stood in the least connexion with us. It is true, indeed, his first offence, according to the divine design, determined the event of our becoming sinners. But the design of God never laid any of his creatures under a necessity of sinning. God designed, that Adam should fall, and, from eternity, provided a remedy for it; but God's design laid him under no necessity of falling, nor of accepting the remedy provided. So, God's design, that we should be sinners, if he partook of the forbidden fruit, did not lay us, or any of his posterity, under a necessity of committing sin. Neither Scripture, nor reason, nor experience, teaches us, that we are *constrained* to hate God, or transgress his holy and righteous commands, by virtue of any guilt, pollution, or depravity, derived from Adam. We have no more right to cast the blame of our sins upon him; than he had to transfer his sin and guilt to us. He must answer for his own sins; and we must answer for ours.

6. If Adam has proved the occasion of involving all his posterity in sin; then children stand in peculiar need of a virtuous and pious education. They are all liable to sin, as soon as they become moral agents. And there is a moral certainty, if they live, that they will run into evil, and incur the divine displeasure. This is a most alarming consideration to parents. They have been the occasion of introducing them into a sinful world, where they are in the utmost danger of dishonoring God, and of destroying themselves forever. If parents would duly consider the depraved hearts of their children, they would feel very solicitous to train them up in the way they should go; and, if possible, early instil into their young and tender minds, the pure principles of religion and virtue. Nor would they neglect to lay all proper restraints upon them, to



preserve them from the paths of the destroyer, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. The law of nature requires parents to promote the temporal happiness of their children; and the law of christianity requires them to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And though they cannot sanctify the hearts of their children; yet they can instruct their minds, restrain their outward conduct, and commend them to Him, who is able to make them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. If they neglect to do these things, they will sin against God, and become accessory to the ruin of their dear offspring. But how can they bear the thoughts of seeing their children openly vicious, and finally impenitent! It would have been better for them never to have been born, than to live and to die in sin. Their case, therefore, loudly calls for the compassion, the prayers, and instructions of their parents, who are under every tender and solemn tie, to do all in their power, to promote their temporal and eternal happiness.

7. This subject calls upon all impenitent sinners, immediately to repent and believe the gospel. They have no excuse for their enmity and disobedience to God. They have never been necessarily drawn into sin, by any corrupt nature or corrupt principle derived from Adam. They have sinned freely and voluntarily, and therefore destroyed themselves. In this guilty and perishing situation, it is their immediate duty to repent, and look up to God for pardoning mercy, through the divine Redeemer. He came to seek and to save those who are lost, and stands ready to receive all weary, heavy laden sinners. Let them no longer charge their misery and guilt upon God, nor upon Adam; but let them take the shame and

blame of all their sins to themselves. And as they have freely and voluntarily sinned; so let them freely and voluntarily repent and believe the gospel. This is their immediate and important duty. They have no excuse for a moment's delay. Life and death are now set before them. It depends not upon the conduct of Adam, but upon their own choice, whether they shall be happy, or miserable forever. Though their sins have greatly abounded; yet if they repent and believe the gospel, the grace of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, shall much more abound, in their eternal salvation. Amen.

## SERMON XIV.

### THE NATURE, EXTENT, AND INFLUENCE OF THE MORAL DEPRAVITY OF SINNERS.

ROMANS viii, 7, 8.

*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

IT has been much disputed of late, among those who call themselves Calvinists, whether all the doings of unregenerate men are altogether sinful. There would be no difficulty in deciding this question, if those, who profess to believe the total corruption of human nature, would only agree to draw the same inference from it. But there are many, who acknowledge, that the *hearts* of sinners are totally depraved, and yet deny, that their *actions* are altogether criminal. It seems necessary, therefore, in order to bring this point to a fair and final decision, not only to prove, that sinners are totally depraved; but also to prove, that their total depravity extends to all their actions, and turns them into sin. And the words which I have read, naturally lead us to consider this subject in this manner. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." By the carnal mind, the Apostle means the carnal *heart*; for it is the *heart* only, which is enmity against God. And this carnal heart he represents, as corrupting all the actions which proceed from it. He lays down the total depravity of sinners as a first

principle, from which he draws the only fair and natural conclusion, that they cannot please God. His plain meaning, therefore, may be clearly expressed in this plain proposition:

The total depravity of sinners renders all their actions totally depraved:

To illustrate this subject, I shall,

I. Show, that sinners are totally depraved: And,

II. Show, that their total depravity totally depraves all their actions:

I. I am to show, that sinners are totally depraved.

There is no truth more clearly and fully taught in Scripture, than the total depravity of sinners. They are represented as spiritually *deaf* and *blind*. "Bring forth the *blind* people that have eyes, and the *deaf* that have ears. Hear, ye *deaf*; and look, ye *blind*, that ye may see." They are represented as spiritually *dead*. "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the *dead*, and Christ shall give thee light. And you hath he quickened, who were *dead* in trespasses and sins." They are represented as incapable of discerning the moral beauty of divine objects. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." These are plain, though figurative descriptions of the total depravity of sinners. Their hearts are also represented as not only destitute of moral goodness, but as full of moral evil. We read, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Solomon says, "The heart of the sons of men is *full* of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead." Our Lord told the

unbelieving Jews, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell?" The Apostle Paul paints the total depravity of sinners in the strongest colors. "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes." Agreeably to these representations, we find such appellations and epithets given to sinners, as strongly express their total depravity. They are called the *unjust*, the *unrighteous*, the *ungodly*, the *unholy*, the *unbelieving*, and enemies of the cross of Christ. Such persons as justly deserve these characters, must be entirely destitute of every holy and virtuous affection.

But the manner, in which the Scripture *distinguishes* saints from sinners, affords the most clear and convincing evidence, that all who are not saints, are totally depraved. According to Scripture, he that loveth God is a saint, but he that loveth him not is a sinner; he that repenteth of sin is a saint, but he that repenteth not is a sinner; he that believeth in Christ is a saint, but he that believeth not is a sinner; he that is born of God is a saint, but he that is not born of God is a sinner; he that is in the Spirit is a saint, but he that is in the flesh is a sinner; he that is *for* Christ is a saint, but he that is *against* him is a sinner. This mode of distinction necessarily implies, that saints

have *some* grace, but sinners have *none*; that saints have *some* holiness, but sinners have *none*; and that nothing short of *total* depravity can justly denominate any person a sinner, in distinction from a saint. Though the plainest passages of Scripture in favor of total depravity, may be tortured to some other meaning; yet this argument in favor of this doctrine, drawn from the *scriptural manner* of distinguishing saints from sinners, admits of no evasion, and cannot be rejected, without rejecting the very distinction itself. Whoever undertakes to describe a sinner, without taking total depravity into his character, will describe a saint. If he say, a sinner is one who sometimes does good, and sometimes does evil; this is a description of a saint. For every saint sometimes does good, and sometimes does evil. If he say, a sinner is one who does more evil than good; this is a description of a saint. For every saint has more sin than holiness. If he say, a sinner is one who has the lowest degree of grace; this is a description of a saint. For the least degree of love, faith, repentance, or any other holy affection, forms the character of a saint, and entitles him to the divine favor. Indeed, ask any intelligent, frank, candid man, who denies total depravity, to tell you the essential difference between a saint and a sinner, and he will freely acknowledge that it is out of his power. For he knows, if all men are possessed of *some* real holiness, then the only moral difference between one person and another is, that one has *more*, and another has *less* true love to God. But this is the difference between one saint and another, and not the difference between a saint and a sinner. The most celebrated Writers, who deny total depravity, appear to be unable to point out any essential difference between saints and sinners. We may read all the ser-

mons of Barrow, Clarke, Hoadley, and Tillotson, and never find a single instance, in which they have drawn two essentially different moral characters. They speak of saints and sinners in Scripture language; but they never show, wherein they essentially differ, nor describe that particular act or exercise of mind, by which a sinner becomes a saint. Hence it appears from fact, as well as from Scripture, that it is impossible to point out any essential moral difference between a sinner and a saint, without making total depravity the peculiar and essential character of a sinner. If there be any such persons in the world, therefore, as justly deserve to be called *sinners*, in distinction from *saints*, they are totally depraved, and wholly under the dominion of a carnal mind, which is enmity against God. The way is now prepared to show,

II. That the total depravity of sinners totally defiles and depraves all their actions.

Their total depravity is of a moral nature, and entirely distinct from their intellectual powers. They can perceive as well, they can remember as well, they can reason as well, and they can distinguish between moral good and evil as well, as the best of saints. The total depravity of their natural faculties, would entirely destroy their *moral* depravity. For were their reason and conscience totally depraved, they would be altogether incapable of doing right or wrong, or performing any *moral* action, which should be either pleasing or displeasing to God. Their moral depravity, therefore, must consist in their *hearts*. And this is agreeable to the whole tenor of Scripture. The Apostle tells us, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." As enmity belongs to the heart, and not to the understanding; so the heart must be the seat of moral corruption. Solomon says, "Foolishness is

bound in the *heart* of a child; but the rod of correction will drive it far from him." By foolishness here he means moral depravity; and this he places in the *heart*. God promises to renew the *hearts* of sinners, in order to remove their moral depravity. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." If the removal of an evil heart will take away total depravity, then total depravity certainly consists in an evil heart. When God would paint the depravity of sinners in the strongest colors, he says, "When they *knew* him, they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish *heart* was darkened." So when Christ would aggravate the depravity and guilt of the Jews in the highest degree, he says, "They have both *seen* and *hated* both me and my father." Paul also represents the very essence of sin, or moral depravity, as consisting in the opposition of the *heart* to the light of conscience. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." And this every sinner knows to be true, by his own experience. He finds that his *heart* is not only distinct from his *conscience*, but in direct opposition to it. His *conscience* tells him to do what his *heart* hates and opposes; and on the other hand, his *heart* inclines him to do what his *conscience* forbids and condemns. It appears from Scripture and experience, therefore, that the *heart* is the only seat of moral depravity. There is no other place in the mind, where it can be found, nor where it can possibly exist.

Now, if sinners are totally depraved, and their total depravity lies in the *heart*; then the Apostle's reasoning is plain and conclusive. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." A corrupt heart



question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and prophets." It is easy to see the truth and propriety of this exposition, if all the actions of men flow from the heart. For if this be true, then the commands to read and pray, to labor six days in the week and sanctify the seventh, and to perform all other virtuous and holy actions, are necessarily comprized in the law of love. By requiring a *good heart*, God virtually requires all good actions, and virtually forbids all bad actions. So the Apostle reasons upon the subject. "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, that is, for this reason, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." This text plainly teaches, that the law requires love, because love will produce all good actions, and prevent all bad ones; or in other words, that the law requires a *good heart*, because *all good actions* will flow from it; and forbids a *bad heart*; because *all bad actions* will flow from it. Thus it appears from Scripture precepts and prohibitions, as well as from Scripture representations and declarations, that all human actions flow from the *heart*. And to make it appear, that we have given the true sense of Scripture upon this point, and still further to establish it, we may observe;

2. That moral agency wholly consists in the *heart*, and therefore every moral action must necessarily flow from this; and no other source.

The heart consists in voluntary exercises; and voluntary exercises are moral agency. Willing is acting. Willing right is acting right; and willing wrong is acting wrong. All voluntary exercises belong to the heart; and therefore loving and hating is as really acting, as choosing and refusing. It is true, we sometimes make a distinction among the exercises of the heart; and call some *affections*, and others *volitions*. But the only ground of this distinction is, that loving and hating, which we call *affections*, are *immanent* exercises of the heart, which produce *no external* effects; whereas choosing and refusing, which we call *volitions*, are imperative acts of the will, and productive of external actions. Moral agency, however, equally belongs to the *heart* and the *will*, or to both *affections* and *volitions*. For we *act* when we *love*, whether we express our love or not. And we *act*, when we *hate*, whether we express our hatred or not. There is as much moral agency in the *affections* of the heart, as in the *volitions* of the will. The heart and will are essentially the same; or the will is only the heart producing external effects. So that strictly speaking, all moral agency belongs to the *heart*, as distinguished from all the other powers and faculties of the mind. The truth of this we all know by our own experience. No man feels, that any motion of body or mind is *his action*, unless his heart is concerned in it. If his eye, or head, or hand, or foot, should move without the concurrence of his heart, he would not call that motion *his action*, nor feel in the least degree accountable for it. Or if his intellectual powers were put in motion, without the choice of his heart, he would not call those

mental motions *his actions*, nor feel either praise or blame worthy for them. No exercises of body or mind have any *moral* quality, without the heart. There is no moral good, nor moral evil in *thoughts*, only as the heart approves or disapproves them. There is no moral good, nor moral evil in *words*, only as the heart approves or disapproves them. There is no moral good nor moral evil in reading, walking, or laboring, only as the heart approves or disapproves these external exertions. The reason is, all thoughts, words, and external exertions, are not *actions*, but mere *motions*, without the heart. All moral agency consists in the heart. With the heart man loves; with the heart man hates; with the heart man chooses and refuses; with the heart man believes and disbelieves; and with the heart he does all that may be called his action. For without the heart, he is a mere passive machine, which may be acted upon, but which cannot act. And on this ground it is, that the law of God knows the heart only, requires the heart only, and forbids the heart only. "My son, says God, give me thine heart." And, says the Apostle, "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." God requires and accepts a good heart, but forbids and rejects a bad one. The heart comprises all that he requires or forbids; because to require or forbid any exercise or action without the heart, would be the same as to require or forbid an act without an agent, which is palpably absurd. Now if sinners always act from the heart, and if the heart, from which they act, be totally depraved, then all their actions must be totally depraved. If there be no flaw in any link of this chain of reasoning, and if one link be inseparably connected with another; then it must bind every person to believe, that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

IMPROVEMENT.

1. We learn from what has been said, wherein their mistake lies, who acknowledge the total depravity of sinners, and yet deny their total sinfulness.

Those, who run into this inconsistency, have often been refuted, without being convinced. But it is much to be desired, that they should be convinced as well as refuted; and if the fallacy of their reasoning be fairly and clearly pointed out, perhaps they will be convinced. If the hearts of sinners be totally depraved, and all their actions proceed from their hearts, then all their actions must be totally depraved. This is too plain to be denied. Those, therefore, who deny that total sinfulness is the consequence of total depravity, deny that *all* the actions of sinners proceed from their *hearts*. And were this true, they might acknowledge total depravity, and yet deny total sinfulness, without the least inconsistency. Accordingly we find, they make a distinction between actions, which flow from the heart, and those, which flow from reason, conscience, or natural affections. They acknowledge, the heart is totally depraved, and all the actions which proceed from it; but they deny the total depravity of reason, conscience, and natural affections, and therefore deny, that the actions, which proceed from these innocent principles, are totally sinful. They say, sinners sometimes act only from their heart; sometimes only from their conscience; and sometimes only from their natural affections. And when they act only from the heart, which is totally corrupt, then their actions are entirely sinful. But when they act from the harmless principles of reason, conscience, and natural affections, then their actions are altogether innocent and acceptable to God. Now when they say this, they say something of which others are as capable of judging as themselves.

I now appeal to every person, whether he is *conscious* of ever acting from mere reason, or from mere conscience, or from mere natural affections, *without the heart*. I presume no person can say, that he is *conscious* of ever acting from any of these natural principles *without the heart*. I appeal to every person again, whether he is *conscious* of ever acting from these natural principles, *contrary to the heart*. I presume no person can say, that he is *conscious* of ever acting from these natural principles *contrary to the heart*. I appeal to every person once more, whether he is *not conscious* of often acting *contrary* to reason, *contrary* to conscience, and *contrary* to natural affections. I presume every person can say, that he is *conscious* of often acting *contrary* to all these natural principles. But how can these be principles of action, if we never act *from* them, and often act *against* them? The heart is a principle of action, and therefore we cannot act *against* it. And were reason, conscience, and natural affections, principles of action, we could no more act *against* these, than *against* the heart. Hence it evidently follows, that reason, conscience, and natural affections, are no *principles* of action, but only *motives* of action. It is acknowledged, that they often operate as *motives*, which influence the heart, the only proper principle of action. If reason dictate to a man, that it is best to be temperate; his reason is not the principle of action; but his *heart*, which acts agreeably to the motive suggested by reason. If conscience dictate to a man, that it is his duty to observe the sabbath; his conscience is not the principle of action, but his *heart*, which acts agreeably to the motive suggested by conscience. Or if natural affection dictate to a man to give a beloved child the largest portion of his inheritance; his natural affection

is not the principle of action, but his *heart*, which acts agreeably to his natural affection. Now, if reason, conscience, and natural affection be not principles of action, then no action can flow from them, but every action must flow from the *heart*. And if all actions flow from the heart, then either all the actions of sinners are totally corrupt, or none of them. But all who acknowledge the total depravity of sinners, allow that those actions which flow from the heart are totally corrupt. Since, then, all the actions of sinners do in fact flow from the heart, and can flow from no other principle; all who admit the doctrine of total depravity, must, in order to be consistent, acknowledge that all the actions of sinners are totally depraved. If they admit the Apostle's premises, they must adopt his conclusion, that they that are in the flesh, and act entirely from a carnal heart, cannot please God.

2. If it be a truth, that sinners are totally depraved, then it is a very important truth. The doctrine of total depravity holds a distinguished place among the doctrines of the gospel. It lies at the foundation of some of the principle articles of christianity. And were christians agreed in this great truth, they would soon put an end to many of their religious disputes. They would no longer contend about the character and conduct of sinners. They would no longer contend about the nature and necessity of regeneration. They would no longer contend about common and special grace. They would no longer contend about the terms of justification. They would no longer contend about the proper qualifications for communion at the table of the Lord. Nor would they any longer contend about universal salvation. For, divine sovereignty in the dispensations of grace, naturally results from the doctrine of total depravity. So that total deprav-

ity is not an unmeaning phrase, but a most solemn and important truth, which is inseparably connected with the leading and fundamental doctrines of the christian religion.

3. We learn from what has been said, that the total depravity of sinners does not destroy, nor diminish their obligation to obey the divine commands. It appears, that their total depravity consists wholly in the corruption of their hearts. Their intellectual faculties remain uncorrupt. Their perception, reason, and conscience, are in their full strength and vigor. And these are the sole ground of moral obligation. To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. Satan knows to do good, notwithstanding the total corruption of his heart, and therefore he is under the same obligation he ever was, to love and obey his Maker. And since the total depravity of sinners does not destroy their knowledge of duty, it does not destroy their obligation to do it. Moral obligation does not depend in the least degree upon the disposition of the heart. Whether men have good or bad hearts, they are equally obliged to love and serve their Creator. Accordingly God never makes the least allowance for the corruption of their hearts, in any of his precepts and prohibitions. Though he knew, that the Israelites in general were totally depraved, when he gave the law at Mount Sinai; yet he required them to love him with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their strength, upon pain of eternal destruction. And though Christ knew that the Jews were of their father the devil, and totally depraved; yet he required them to be perfect even as their Father in heaven is perfect. The divine commands fall with all their weight and authority upon the consciences of sinners. Their depravity of heart lessens not their

obligation to obedience. They have as much to do as other men. They have to obey all the commands in the Bible. They have to read, and pray, and do every thing, that good men have to do. The total corruption of their hearts will not afford them the least excuse for the least disaffection to God, nor for the least disobedience to any of his commands.

4. We learn from what has been said, why God condemns the *best* as well as the *worst* actions of sinners. Every one can see a reason, why God should condemn their open vices and immoralities; but many can see no reason why he should condemn their apparent love, obedience, and devotion. But we find he does, for some reason or other, condemn their *best* as well as their *worst* actions, in the plainest and strongest terms. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. I hate, I despise, your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though you offer me burnt-offerings and your meat-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts." Such sacrifices, prayers, and religious devotions of sinners, may be considered as their *best* performances; but these God expressly says he abhors and condemns. And the reason is plain and obvious. The *best* performances of sinners proceed from the same totally corrupt heart, from which their open vices and immoralities proceed, and therefore are equally corrupt and sinful. When sinners come before God with a corrupt heart, they come



at their peril; for God tells them, that he never required them to come in such a manner. When ye come to appear before me, *who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts?*” Yea, he forbids them to come and worship him with an unfriendly heart. “Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with: it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting, Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear.” God looketh not on the outward appearance, but upon the heart. He views the best actions of sinners as flowing from a totally corrupt heart, and therefore abhors and condemns them as altogether criminal.

5. We learn from what has been said, why none of the works of sinners will be accepted, at the last day. Our Savior, who will be the final Judge, has absolutely declared, that he will condemn all sinners and all their works, without distinction, in the great day of account. And though they may plead, that they have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick, and done many deeds of apparent humanity and benevolence; yet he will reject and punish them, for that criminal selfishness, which was the source of all their actions. And this will be a sufficient reason for their everlasting perdition. If the hearts of all sinners are totally depraved, and if all their actions proceed from their totally corrupt hearts; then Christ may with the greatest propriety, place them all at his left hand, and condemn all their actions, when he comes to judge the world in righteousness. When the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest, it will ap-

pear that the finally impenitent never had one right affection, nor one good intention, in the whole course of their lives. And when this appears, the whole universe must approve of Christ, in dooming them all to endless destruction.

6. We learn from what has been said, why the divine law, when it comes to the conscience, revives the guilt and destroys the hope of every sinner. Many sinners are so strict in their external conduct, and so serious and devout in their religious services, that they not only pacify their consciences, but even entertain high hopes of the favor of God and the enjoyment of heaven. But this is owing to their ignorance of the nature and extent of the divine law, and of the total corruption of their hearts. Whenever, therefore, the divine law is set home upon their consciences, it discovers the enmity of their hearts, and destroys all their hopes of heaven. This Paul found to be the case by his own experience. "I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death: For sin taking occasion by the commandment deceived me, and by it slew me." Paul, before his conversion, was a man of a fair moral character, and zealous in the religion of his sect. His hopes of heaven were high, and he had no doubt of being a sincere friend to God. But when the commandment came, it discovered his heart and destroyed his hopes of the divine favor. He felt himself to be a poor, miserable, guilty sinner. He found that in him, that is in his carnal mind, there dwelt no good thing. He was fully convinced, that he had always acted from a carnal, selfish heart, which was unfriendly to God, and which justly deserved his everlasting displeasure. And if it be true, that sinners al-

ways act from a carnal heart, which the law of God forbids; then the law of God, when it comes home to the conscience, must necessarily condemn them for all their thoughts, words and actions. And when they feel this conviction, there is nothing, which can keep them from complete despair, but a belief, that a holy, gracious and sovereign God can subdue their enmity and save them, in spite of their hearts.

7. We learn from what has been said, that it is the immediate duty of sinners to become reconciled to God. This is their first and most important duty. Their reading and praying, their seeking and striving, and every thing they do, will be displeasing to God, until they become heartily reconciled to his holy and amiable character. God is not only supremely glorious and excellent in his own nature; but he has always treated sinners with the greatest kindness and tenderness. He has never said any thing in his word, nor done any thing in his providence, which has ever given them any just ground for their disaffection. And, therefore, he solemnly calls upon them to impeach a single instance of his conduct, if they can. "Hear ye now what the Lord saith: Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me." Since sinners have always hated God without a cause, it is their immediate duty to renounce their groundless enmity, and become reconciled to their kind and gracious Creator. Hence the sacred teachers unitedly exhort them to immediate holiness and reconciliation of heart to God. Isaiah says, "Let

the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Ezekiel says, "Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and *make you a new heart and a new spirit*: for why will ye die?" And the Apostle Paul calls upon the enemies of God, in the most solemn and endearing manner, to become immediately friendly to him. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, *Be ye reconciled to God.*" Amen.

## SERMON XV.

ON THE SPECIAL AND IRRESISTIBLE GRACE OF  
GOD IN THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS.

PSALM CX, 8.

*Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.*

THE great scheme of our redemption was concerted, by the sacred Trinity, before the foundation of the world. The Father and Son mutually agreed, in the early days of eternity, to perform distinct parts, in carrying into execution this gracious design. The Son engaged to become incarnate, and lay down his life in the room of sinners. And the Father engaged to give the Son a certain number of the human race, as a reward for his sufferings and death. It is, therefore, in reference to this original covenant between the Father and the Son, that the former says to the latter in the text, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." These words naturally suggest this plain truth to our present consideration:

That God is able, by an act of his power, to make those willing to be saved, whom he has given to Christ.

In illustrating this subject, I shall endeavor to make it appear,

I. That God has given a certain number of mankind to Christ.

II. That they are naturally unwilling to be saved. And yet,

III. That God is able, by an act of his power, to make them willing.

I. I am to make it appear, that God has given a certain number of mankind to Christ.

The evangelical Prophet, speaking of the suffering Savior, expressly declares, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, *he shall see his seed*; he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. *He shall see of the travel of his soul, and shall be satisfied.*" Agreeably to this and to other similar promises, Christ himself declares in the tenth of John, "*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.*" For these, in distinction from others, Christ prays in particular, just before his death. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me. I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." This portion of mankind the Apostle Paul often mentions, under various appellations. He calls them the *fulness* of Christ, the *body* of Christ, and the *members* of Christ. He represents them as originally predestinated to perfect holiness and future glory. "We know, says he, that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also

called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Such is the united testimony of the inspired writers, that the Father hath given the Son a certain number of the fallen race, who shall be made holy in this life, and happy in the next. This leads me to show,

II. That these persons, like the rest of mankind, are naturally unwilling to be saved.

The text clearly conveys this idea. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." This mode of expression plainly implies, that antecedent to the day of divine power, the people of Christ are unwilling to be saved. And this will more clearly appear, if we consider,

1. That they are naturally enemies to Christ. They are represented under this character in the context. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make *thine enemies* thy footstool." And again, "Rule thou in the midst of *thine enemies*." This is the true character of all sinners, without exception. Our Savior, who was perfectly acquainted with the hearts of the unregenerate, plainly told them, that they were serpents, a generation of vipers, and the children of the devil. And speaking of the same persons, to whom he had preached, and before whose eyes he had done many mighty works, he says, "Now have they both seen and *hated* both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law. *They hated me without a cause.*" The elect, as well as the non-elect, naturally possess a spirit of opposition to Christ; and so long as they remain enemies to him, they say in their hearts, "We will not have this man to reign over us."

2. It appears from the conduct of sinners under the gospel, that they are unwilling to be saved. When Christ called upon them to come to him for life, they soon discovered a strong disposition to reject his gracious invitations. This led him to tell them in plain terms, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." And he foretold, in the parable of the gospel-feast, that sinners would, in time to come, treat the offers of salvation with the same neglect and contempt. "Then said he unto them, a certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse." This prediction has been fulfilled all over the christian world. How many thousands of the fallen race have been invited to accept of salvation, who have finally refused? And where has one been found, who was naturally willing, to submit to the terms of life? Universal experience proves, that all men are naturally unwilling to believe in Christ. Though some sinners seem to be more friendly to the gospel than others; yet it appears from the conduct of all, that they are naturally and equally unwilling to comply with the terms of life. They do, indeed, make different excuses for slighting the gospel; but it is the same evil heart of unbelief, which leads them to reject the counsel of God against themselves. The three thousand, who were converted on the day of Pentecost, were as heartily opposed to Christ, before their conversion, as any, who imbrued their hands in his blood. Paul persisted in despising and opposing the gospel, until his heart was effectually subdued, by an act of irresistible grace. And all, who are now the friends of Christ, were once his real enemies, and totally unwilling to embrace the offers of



salvation. The elect are no better by nature, than the non-elect; and were they left to themselves, they would finally refuse to be saved, and perish in their sins forever. But yet,

III. God is able, by an act of his power, to make them willing to accept of salvation. Since this is a point of great importance, in the present discourse, I shall endeavor to establish it, by a number of plain and conclusive arguments.

1. God has promised to make those willing to be saved, whom he has given to Christ. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." The thing here promised is to be performed by the Father, though it seems to be ascribed to the Son. Any divine work may be ascribed to either person in the sacred Trinity. Accordingly we find in Scripture, that the renovation of the heart is sometimes ascribed to the Father, sometimes to the Son, and sometimes to the Holy Ghost. In the text, the Father is speaking, and therefore he must be the person promising to make Christ's people willing, in the day of his power. And this further appears to be the meaning of the text, from the preceding words. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." At another time, God the Father promised to subdue the hearts of sinners, among his own people. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh, and *cause* you to walk in my statutes." Also by the Prophet Joel, God promised to pour out his spirit, in the last days, upon all flesh, and bring them to a cordial reception of the peculiar blessings of the gospel. Now, can we suppose, that God would thus expressly

promise to make men willing to be saved, unless he were able to bow their wills, by an act of his power? Would it be consistent with his holiness and truth, to promise to subdue the hearts of sinners, at a certain time and in a certain place, if he knew this to be an effect above his power to produce? Unless he had the supreme control over the hearts of men, we may presume, he would never have promised to make his own and his son's enemies willing to be saved, in the day of his power. Hence all his promises to renew the hearts of sinners, are so many proofs of his power to produce this saving change.

2. God has actually softened the hearts of the most hardened and obstinate sinners. As he promised to change the hearts of sinners in Babylon, so he punctually fulfilled his promise. He poured out his spirit upon them, and raised them from spiritual death to spiritual life. He took away their hard and stony hearts, and gave them hearts of flesh. Though they had long repined at the ways of his providence; yet he brought them to a cheerful submission to his sovereignty. Nor was he less faithful to fulfil the promise made to Christ in the text. At the time appointed, which was the day of Pentecost, he laid three thousand of his enemies at his footstool. This the Apostle Peter declares to be a fulfilment of the promise contained in the text and context, which he quotes and explains, on that great occasion. "Therefore Jesus being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which you now see and hear: For David is not ascended into the heavens: but saith himself, the Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." When Peter preached to Cornelius and to

those at his house, God poured out his spirit upon them, and "gave them repentance unto life." God opened the heart of Lydia, and made her willing to embrace the gospel preached by Paul. And before this, he made a still more signal display of irresistible grace, in the conversion of Paul himself. He was a blasphemer and persecutor. He determined to resist all means and motives to conversion. And he felt superior to any divine influence. But the King eternal, invisible, and omnipotent, was able to lay him prostrate at the feet of that Jesus, whom he had despised and persecuted. These, and many other instances of conversion, which are recorded in the Bible, demonstrate the power of God to make men willing to be saved.

8. The Scripture represents God, as not only making men willing to be saved, but as making them willing, by an act of his power. Paul speaking of himself and of other christians, who were prepared for heaven, says, "Now he that hath wrought us for the self same thing is God." He inculcates the same sentiment upon the minds of the saints of Ephesus. "That ye may know what is the hope of your calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the *exceeding greatness of his power* to us-ward who believe, according to the working of *his mighty power*; which he wrought in Christ Jesus when he raised him from the dead." And in the next chapter he goes on to say, "You hath he *quicken*ed, who were dead in trespasses and sins. Even when we were dead in sins, hath he quickened us together with Christ. For we are as *his workmanship, created* in Christ Jesus unto good works, which he hath foreordained that we should walk in them." In one place he says, "If any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature*: old things are passed

away; behold all things *are become new*." This he explains, in the next words, to be God's making men willing to be saved. And all things are *of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ*." In another place he says, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but a *new creature*." Furthermore, he represents God as beginning and carrying on a work of grace, by a *powerful operation* on the minds of men. To the Philippians he says, "Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a *good work in you*, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." And in the next chapter he says again, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who worketh in you both *to will and to do* of his good pleasure." And for this gracious and powerful operation on the hearts of believers, he prays in the thirteenth of Hebrews: "Now the God of peace make you perfect to his will, *working in you* that which is well pleasing in his sight." According to these and many other passages of Scripture, God makes men willing to be saved by an act of his power. He not only addresses their eyes and ears, by external objects, and their understandings and consciences, by moral motives; but he actually operates upon their hearts, and there produces new feelings or affections, by the same almighty power, which he exerted in creating the world, and in raising Christ from the dead. Nothing short of this can be meant, by his *raising* men to spiritual life, making them *new creatures*, and *working in them* that which is well pleasing in his sight. To explain away such expressions, and make them mean moral suasion only, is to do violence to Scripture, and wrest it in such a manner, as to destroy at once both its meaning and usefulness.

4. The Scripture represents God as making *men* willing to be saved, by an act of his power, in distinction from all other ways of producing this effect. To this purpose, is that noted passage in the first of John. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, *but of God.*" Here the renovation of the heart is ascribed to a divine operation, in distinction from all other means or second causes. A like representation we find in the ninth of Romans. "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that *willeth*, nor of him that *runneth*, but of *God* that sheweth mercy." The Apostle's words, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, are still more expressive and definitive on this point. "I have planted, Apollos watered; but *God gave the increase.* So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but *God that giveth the increase.*" He adds, "Ye are *God's* husbandry, ye are *God's* building." The inspired writers all speak the same language upon this subject. They totally exclude men and means in the conversion of sinners; and ascribe the production of this effect to the immediate power of the Deity. I may add,

5. It appears from universal observation and experience, that nothing short of a divine operation upon the hearts of sinners, is sufficient to draw them to Christ. Some suppose, there are various ways, in which God can make sinners willing to be saved, without any immediate operation upon their hearts. But it appears from fact, that this is the only way, in which

even Omnipotence can bring them to a cordial compliance with the gospel.

For in the first place, God cannot make them willing to be saved, by giving them a sense of guilt. He may awaken their consciences, and set their sins in order before them, and make them feel, that they justly deserve his wrath and curse, both in this life and in that which is to come. But will such a sense of criminality and ill desert, reconcile them to the way of salvation by Christ? There is no necessary connexion between conviction and conversion. Those under conviction have often expressed their sensible and violent opposition to God, to Christ, and even to heaven itself. Their sense of guilt, instead of diminishing, greatly increased the native enmity of their hearts against every thing holy and divine. It will be universally allowed, that the hearts of the damned grow worse and worse under conviction. And from this we may conclude, that should God give sinners, in this world, as great a sense of guilt as the damned actually feel, it would directly tend to harden, instead of softening their hearts. It does not appear possible, therefore, that God should change the hearts of sinners, by giving them a sense of guilt.

Nor does it appear possible, that he should make them willing to be saved, by giving them a sense of danger. He often does give them as great a sense of danger as of guilt. He often uncovers destruction before them, and makes them feel from day to day, that they are constantly exposed to drop into the bottomless pit. Though, in this situation, they anxiously desire to escape the damnation of hell; yet they have no disposition to repent and believe the gospel. But on the other hand, the more clearly God shews them, that he is able and disposed to punish them according to

their deserts, the more vigorously and sensibly they oppose his holy and amiable sovereignty. And surely God cannot destroy the enmity of their hearts, by that sense of danger, which directly tends to increase it.

Nor, in the last place, can he make them willing to be saved, by giving them a sense of the worth of their souls, and the importance of eternal happiness. He always gives them a sense of these things, when he awakens their consciences to feel their guilt, and opens their eyes to see their danger. Awakened and convinced sinners look upon the happiness of this life, as less than nothing and vanity, in comparison with future and eternal felicity. They view saints as the only happy persons, and would give all the world, if they had it in their power, to gain an interest in Christ, and be in the situation of those, who are rejoicing in the hopes of heaven. But these feelings have no tendency to destroy the enmity of their hearts against God, and prepare them for holy and heavenly enjoyments. Could the gates of heaven be set open, and could they be allowed to step in among the spirits of just men made perfect, they would choose to take up their everlasting residence among sinful, rather than among perfectly holy beings. Thus it appears to be out of the power of the Deity, to convert sinners by moral suasion. All, that he can do in this way, is, to give them a realizing sense of their guilt, of their danger, and of the worth of their souls; but the most lively sense of these things has no tendency to change their hearts. If God can, therefore, fulfil his promise to Christ, and make his people willing to be saved; he must be able to slay the enmity of their hearts, and reconcile them to the terms of life, by an act of his power,

## IMPROVEMENT.

1. If God does, by an act of his power make men willing to be saved; then there is an essential distinction between common and special grace. Many imagine, there is only a gradual or circumstantial difference between one act of divine grace and another. They suppose regeneration or conversion is a gradual change, and effected entirely by clear and repeated exhibitions of divine truth to the view of sinners. Such moral suasion would indeed reconcile them to Christ, if all their opposition to him originated in the weakness or blindness of the understanding. The bare exhibition of divine truth is abundantly sufficient to remove natural ignorance and intellectual errors. But since sinners are unwilling to be saved, when they see their danger and feel their guilt, and when the way of salvation by Christ is clearly pointed out; no moral suasion or objective light can have the least tendency to make them willing. Though the gradual exhibition of objective light may gradually expel the darkness of their understanding; yet nothing can remove their perverse opposition to light itself, but the instantaneous and powerful operation of the divine Spirit upon their hearts. This divine operation, therefore, is special grace, and differs from common grace, in two respects.

In the first place, it makes men willing to be saved. Common grace never produces this effect. By common grace, God invites and commands men to accept of salvation, and makes them feel their obligation to submit to the terms of life. But by special grace, God actually inclines their hearts to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to them in the gospel. God usually exercises common grace toward sinners, long before he makes them the subjects of special grace. He often employs every mode of moral suasion, for a great



while, before he puts forth an act of his power to make them willing to be saved. This appears in the case of Manasseh, of Saul of Tarsus, and of many others, who have been converted late in life. The highest degree of common grace leaves men *unwilling* to be saved; but the lowest degree of special grace makes them *willing*. In this respect, common and special grace essentially differ. And so they do in another respect.

For, in the second place, common grace is granted to all, who enjoy the light of the gospel, while special grace is granted to none but the elect. God makes none willing to be saved but those whom he has given to Christ. He invites and commands others to embrace the gospel, and sometimes awakens them to a lively sense of their danger and guilt; but yet he never puts forth an act of his power, to subdue their hearts and reconcile them to Christ. Hence that act of his power, by which he makes men willing to be saved, is properly an act of special grace, and essentially different from any act of kindness, favor, or assistance, which he bestows upon any, who are finally lost.

2. If God's making men willing to be saved by an act of his power be an act of special grace; then special grace is always irresistible. It is the general representation of Scripture, that common grace may be resisted. God often complains of sinners, for resisting the calls and invitations of his common grace. "I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof." Zechariah says, "They refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words

which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his Spirit by the former prophets." Christ reproves sinners, for resisting the power and influence of common grace. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and *ye would not.*" And Stephen in his dying address to sinners in Jerusalem, plainly tells them, "Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, *ye do always resist the Holy Ghost:* as your fathers did, so do ye." Sinners are able to resist all the objective light afforded them, and all the external means used with them, to bring them to repentance. The reason is, all these means of light and conviction leave them in the full possession of their evil hearts of unbelief. And so long as the enmity of their hearts remains, they are able to resist all the force of moral suasion or common grace. But when God displays his special grace upon them, he takes away the enmity of their hearts, and removes the primary cause of resistance. In the day of his power, he makes them willing to come to Christ for life; and when they are willing to come, there is nothing to prevent their coming. No sinner ever was, or ever will be unwilling to be saved, in the day of God's power. Those, whom God calls by his special grace, are morally obliged to come in and partake of the gospel feast. Hence divines have usually termed this act of special grace, *effectual calling.*

3. If God can make men willing to be saved by an act of his power, and if this act of his power be special grace; then special grace is as consistent with free agency as common grace. The only reason, why common grace is universally supposed to be consistent with free agency is, because it leaves men free to choose and

refuse, or to act just as they please. While they are the subjects of common grace only, they feel themselves at perfect liberty, to choose, or refuse obedience to the will of God. They can choose to read, or they can refuse to read; they can choose to pray, or they can refuse to pray; they can choose to attend public worship, or they can refuse to attend; they can choose to perform all the externals of religion, or they can refuse to perform any religious duty. But if men are perfectly free under the influence of common grace, because they are capable of choosing and refusing; then for the same reason, they must be equally free under the influence of special grace. For special grace essentially consists in making men willing to do their duty. By special grace, God makes men choose to submit to Christ, and refuse to oppose him; choose to pray, and refuse to neglect it; choose to attend public worship, and refuse to neglect it; choose to walk in the ways of wisdom, and refuse to walk in the paths of the destroyer. If this be a just representation of the influence of special grace, then it is certainly as consistent with free agency as common grace. It is true, indeed, if special grace consisted, as some suppose, in giving men a new *principle, faculty, or power*, of choosing; then it would destroy their free agency, and make them entirely passive in regeneration and sanctification. But if, in every act of special grace, God does nothing more, than make men willing to do their duty, or to choose and refuse in a holy and virtuous manner; then it is hard to conceive how special grace does, in the least degree, infringe upon free agency. It is a dictate of common sense, that whatever makes men choose or refuse, is consistent with their liberty; and whatever obstructs or hinders them from choosing and refusing, destroys their freedom. If, therefore.

either common or special grace deprived men of the power of choosing and refusing, it would destroy their free agency. But since neither common nor special grace does take away this power, it is evident, that neither common nor special grace is repugnant to the freedom of the will. Indeed, we do not hesitate to say, that all, who have been the subjects of special grace, know by their own experience, that they have felt as entirely free and voluntary, in acting under the influence of special grace, as ever they did in acting under the influence of common grace.

4. If God can make men willing to be saved, by an act of his power; then there is a plain consistency running through the whole scheme of Calvinism. The fundamental doctrines of this system of divinity are election, total depravity, instantaneous regeneration, and the final perseverance of the saints. If the leading sentiment in this discourse be true, then all these doctrines are entirely consistent.

It is easy to see the consistency of God's choosing a certain number of mankind to eternal life; if he be able, by an act of his power, to make that certain number willing to be saved. Upon this, and upon no other ground, the doctrine of election appears to harmonize with the character of God and the freedom of the creature.

It is easy to see the consistency of God's determining the fall of man, and the total corruption of all his posterity; if he be able, by an act of his power, to remove their depravity. Though total depravity does not render men unyielding to the exhibition of truth, and all the influence of moral suasion; yet it does not put them beyond the reach of special grace, which is in its own nature irresistible. Hence God foresaw no hazard to his gracious design, from the total enmity of

the human heart, which he knew he was able to slay, by an act of his power, whenever he pleased.

It is easy to see the intimate connexion between the doctrine of total depravity, and that of instantaneous regeneration. If special grace consists in an act of God's power, by which he makes totally depraved sinners willing to be saved; then regeneration must be an instantaneous and not a gradual change. There is no medium between men's being unwilling and willing to be saved; they must remain, therefore, totally unwilling to be saved, until the moment they are made willing by an instantaneous act of divine power. In regeneration, conversion, or the new creation, God acts as instantaneously as he did, when he said, "Let there be light, and there was light." This must necessarily be the case, if men are totally depraved, and nothing short of an irresistible act of divine power can remove their total depravity.

It is furthermore easy to see, that the final perseverance of saints is a doctrine inseparably connected with the other doctrines of Calvinism. The same Almighty Agent, who from eternity determined to renew and sanctify the elect, can as easily carry on, as he could begin, a good work in their hearts. And, the same divine purpose, which required their regeneration, equally requires their continued sanctification, or final perseverance in holiness. Hence there is a moral impossibility of their finally falling away, or missing of the kingdom of heaven. Thus it is easy to see, in the light of this subject, that the essential and fundamental principles of the Calvinistic system, are not only consistent with each other, but perfectly harmonize with the character and perfections of the Deity, and with the character and nature of totally depraved creatures.

5. If what has been said in this discourse be true; then the whole scheme of Arminianism is fundamentally wrong. This system of sentiments is entirely built upon *the principle of a self-determining power in men*, to embrace or to reject the terms of salvation. The advocates for this principle justly infer from it, that men are not totally depraved; that God cannot change their hearts by an act of his power; that he cannot cause them to persevere in holiness; and that he could not, consistently with their nature, choose any of them to salvation, from eternity. This scheme, it must be allowed, is very consistent with itself. But if its first principle be unscriptural and absurd; then all the doctrines, which have been deduced from it, have no foundation in Scripture, nor reason. And it plainly appears from the whole tenor of this discourse, that its first principle is repugnant to the whole current of Scripture. We have shown, that God has given a certain number of mankind to Christ; that these, as well as the rest of the fallen race, are totally depraved; that no means or moral motives will make them willing to be saved; and that God only can make them willing, by an act of his power. If these things are true, it necessarily follows, that sinners have not a self-determining power, and never will be saved, unless God, by a sovereign and gracious act of his power, bows their wills to the sceptre of Christ. Those, therefore, who deny the special grace of God in the renovation of the heart, virtually subvert the whole gospel. For by denying this doctrine, they put it out of their power to prove, that one of mankind will be saved, or the least good will be answered, by the great work of redemption. Christ certainly died in vain, if none of mankind will be saved; and it is certain, that none will be saved, if All are left to them-

selves and never made willing in the day of God's power, to embrace the offers of life. No two schemes of religious sentiments are more diametrically opposite to each other, than those of Calvinism and Arminianism. If Calvinism be scriptural, Arminianism is unscriptural; if Calvinism is fundamentally right, Arminianism is fundamentally wrong.

6. If God can make men willing to be saved, by an act of his power; then we may see one reason, why he usually suffers them to triumph in their wickedness, before a general revival of religion. This was God's usual conduct, under the Mosaic dispensation. We commonly read of great degeneracy and moral corruption among his people, just before any great and remarkable outpouring of the spirit. And it appears to have been a time of deep declension, just before the revival of religion on the day of Pentecost, when the promise of the Father in the text was remarkably fulfilled. The same mode of divine conduct has been observed, in these latter days. The Christian History informs us, that there was an uncommon prevalence of vice, irreligion, and carnal stupidity, just before the general revival of religion, about sixty years ago. Now, this subject suggests one reason, why God usually orders things in this manner. It is to make all men see, that the revival of religion is his own work; that he can subdue the hardest hearts; that he can bow the most stubborn sinners; that though Paul plant and Appollas water, yet it is his sole prerogative to give the increase. Who can deny the doctrine of special grace, or disbelieve, that God is able, by an act of his power, to make men willing to be saved; when they see an uncommon revival of religion, and multitudes flocking to Christ, as doves to their windows, before an impending storm? Such sea-

sons as these, are directly suited to shake the faith and hopes of those, who deny the peculiar doctrines of grace. And it is becoming the only wise God, to take this method to make his grace and power known, in the conversion of sinners, and the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom.

7. If God is able, by an act of his power, to make men willing to be saved; then there is a propriety in praying to him, for the revival of religion and the conversion of sinners. Those, who disbelieve the doctrine of special grace, and maintain that sinners are converted by moral suasion, are generally very backward in praying for a special divine influence upon the hearts of men. The reason is obvious. They see no propriety in praying to God, that he would change the hearts of men, when they really believe it is out of his power to do it. But if it be true, that God has the hearts of all men in his hand, and can bow their wills, with infinite ease, to the sceptre of Christ; then there is great propriety in praying, that he would take his own work into his own hands, and fulfil his gracious promises to Christ and to his people, concerning the prosperity of Zion. Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel prayed for the conversion of sinners in Babylon, and their prayers were heard. The Apostles were incessantly praying for the outpourings of the spirit, just before the day of Pentecost; and it was in answer to their prayers, that so many were converted on that joyful occasion. And it is still the constant duty of the people of God, to pray for his gracious influence upon the hearts of sinners, to draw them to Christ. God is abundantly able, to pull down the kingdom of darkness, and build up the kingdom of Christ, through the world. And probably he is only waiting for the fervent and united prayers of his people, for this great



and extensive blessing. "Ye that make mention of the Lord, therefore, keep not silence: and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

Finally, the subject, which we have been considering, naturally suggests a very serious question to every person: Are you pleased with the doctrine of special grace? If you only answer this question sincerely and truly, you will answer another of infinite importance; and that is, whether you are a saint or a sinner. However saints may differ in other respects, yet they all agree in this; that they are pleased with the doctrine of special grace. They have such a view of their own hearts, and of the hearts of all men, that they could not entertain any hopes of their own, or of any other person's salvation, were it not for the doctrine of special grace. All good men, therefore, rejoice that God is able, by an act of his power, to form his own glorious moral image, in whomsoever he pleases. But, on the other hand, however sinners may differ in other respects, they all heartily agree in this, that they dislike the doctrine of special grace. There is no sentiment more grating to their feelings, nor more destructive to their hopes. They cannot bear the thought, that all men are in the hands of God, as the clay is in the hands of the potter. The best and the worst sinners in the world, are here perfectly of one mind. They cannot be pleased with the absolute sovereignty of God. Let the question, then, be repeated, and let no person evade an answer. *Are you pleased with the doctrine of special grace?*

## SERMON XVI.

THE DIVINE CONDUCT, IN THE REPROBATION OF INCORRIGIBLE SINNERS, BOTH ILLUSTRATED AND JUSTIFIED.

EXODUS ix, 16.

*In very deed for this cause have I raised thee up.*

THE history of Pharaoh is extremely interesting to all descriptions of men. It always awakens their feelings, and constrains them to take one side or the other, in the controversy between him and his Maker. Though few will presume to justify the character and conduct of Pharaoh; yet many are bold enough to censure the character and conduct of Jehovah. It is, therefore, a very solemn and important subject, which the words I have read suggest to our serious consideration. God tells Pharaoh to his face, "I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. *And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up.*" This declaration plainly imports, that God raised up Pharaoh, to fit him for destruction. To vindicate this instance of the divine conduct, will be the business of the ensuing discourse. And in order to this, it may be proper to show,

I. That God did destroy Pharaoh.

II. That he raised him up to fit him for destruction.

And,

III. That he is to be justified in this instance of his conduct.

I. I am to show, that God did destroy Pharaoh. The Deity threatened "to cut him off from the earth;

which plainly implied something more, than barely putting an end to his life. Had he permitted him to die by old age, or by sickness, or even by what is commonly called accident, we should have had no right to conclude from the manner of his dying, that he was really destroyed. But there were two circumstances attending his death, which may be justly considered as denoting his destruction. He was cut off in the midst of his wickedness. Though he had been visited with plague after plague, yet he persisted in hardening his heart against God; and though he had permitted the Israelites to leave his kingdom, yet he pursued them, with a strong desire and expectation, of making them feel the weight of his vengeance. "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil: I will draw the sword, my hand shall destroy them." This was the language of Pharaoh's heart. He breathed nothing but malice and revenge; and he was cut off in the full exercise of these malignant passions. This is one circumstance, which indicates, that his death was his destruction. And another is, that he died by the immediate hand of divine justice. As God opened the Red Sea in mercy to Israel, so he shut it again in judgment to Pharaoh, whom he had threatened to destroy. This was cutting him off by a judicial act, and in the same manner, in which he had destroyed other incorrigible enemies. He drowned the inhabitants of the old world, by a flood. He consumed the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, by fire from heaven. Those sinners, we know, were victims of divine wrath, and set forth as examples, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. And since Pharaoh died, as they died, we may conclude, that he perished, as they perished. God raised him up not merely for death, but for destruction. And it is not the first, but

the second death, which may be properly called the destruction of a rational and immortal creature. This warrants us to believe, that when God cut off Pharaoh from the earth, he consigned him to the regions of darkness, where he is reserved unto the judgment and condemnation of the great day.

II. I am to show, that God raised up Pharaoh to fit him for destruction. God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. He never does any thing without a previous design. If he did destroy Pharaoh, in the manner, which has been represented, there can be no doubt but that he previously intended to destroy him in such a manner. But the divine declarations supersede the necessity of reasoning upon this head. God made known, from time to time, his purpose of destroying Pharaoh. He told Pharaoh to his face, that he would cut him off from the earth, and that he had raised him up for this purpose. He said to Moses before he went to Pharaoh, "I am sure the king of Egypt will not let you go:" and added, "I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt." This was a plain prediction of the overthrow of Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea. And with equal plainness he revealed his purpose of destroying Pharaoh to his friend Abraham. "Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years: And that nation whom they shall serve, *I will judge;*" that is, destroy. It appears from this last prediction, that God had formed his purpose concerning Pharaoh, ages before he brought him into being; and hence we may naturally conclude, that he formed it from the early ages of eternity. He then formed all his other purposes; and there is no reason to imagine, that he determined the character and condition of the king of Egypt, in a later period.

Now, if we look into the history of God's conduct towards Pharaoh, we shall find, that he used all the proper and necessary means, to form him a vessel of wrath, and fit him for that miserable end, to which he was appointed.

1. He raised him up out of nothing into being. He gave him a rational and immortal existence. He endued him with all the intellectual faculties, which were necessary to constitute him a free, moral agent. Pharaoh appears to have possessed a strong and capacious mind. He was certainly capable of enlarged views. He had an extensive reach in his politics. His designs and measures, with respect to the children of Israel, were deep and well adapted, to answer the purposes of his own personal power and interest. This shows that the Father of spirits gave him superior abilities and placed him high in mental eminence.

2. God raised him up to the throne of Egypt. He girded him, and carried him in the arms of his providence, through infancy, childhood, and youth, up to riper years. He gave him opportunities for cultivating his natural powers, and for qualifying himself for the highest station in life. At length, he placed the crown upon his head, and put the reins of government into his hands. He now stood at the head of a nation which held the first rank among the nations of the earth, in respect to power, wealth, learning, and all the refinements of polished life. In this splendid situation, he was surrounded with every thing, that could please his taste, flatter his vanity, and enflame his ambition. He knew no man in the world, who was able to control either his power, or his pursuits. To such a giddy height God was pleased to raise him in the course of his providence. And this was a natural and necessary step, to prepare him for his final fate.

For it is a divine maxim, that "pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

3. God not only raised Pharaoh to the pinnacle of human glory, but also removed from him outward restraints. Barely giving him the power of an unlimited monarch, was virtually setting him above all legal influence and control. But besides this, God removed Moses from his presence and kingdom, who was learned in all the wisdom of Egypt, and thoroughly acquainted with all the arts and intrigues of a court. Had this wise and pious man been permitted to stand near the throne, or even to live in the kingdom, his example and influence might have been a silent and powerful check upon the ambition and cruelty of a lawless tyrant. But it seems God sent him into Midian, on purpose to give Pharaoh ample opportunity of indulging his inhuman and malignant disposition in oppressing and abusing his innocent subjects. Accordingly we find, that it was in the absence of Moses, that he devised and passed those cruel edicts, which were designed to break the spirits and destroy the lives of the unoffending Israelites. God meant, by taking off outward restraints, to give him a fair opportunity of filling up the measure of his sins, and of ripening himself for deserved and predestinated ruin.

4. God endured this vessel of wrath, with much long-suffering and forbearance. Instead of treating him according to his deserts, he waited long to be gracious. He used a variety of means to bring him to repentance. He sent him one solemn message after another, by the mouth of Moses and of Aaron. And to impress those messages the more deeply on his mind, he followed them with one awful judgment after another, until he had spread desolation, terror, and mourning through the land. These dreadful scenes

were too heavy for Pharaoh to bear, and constrained him time after time to stoop, and beg for relief. His cries were heard, and respite was granted. But mercies, as well as judgments, conspired to increase his stupidity and hardness of heart, which prepared him for a more unexpected and more aggravated doom.

But how came Pharaoh to wax worse and worse under both the smiles and frowns of heaven? Mercies and afflictions have a moral tendency to soften and meliorate the hearts of good men. Saints have often derived great benefit from the manurings and cultivations of divine providence. And even obdurate sinners, such as Manasseh, have been brought to humility and repentance, under divine corrections. How, then, did it come to pass, that Pharaoh grew more and more stupid and incorrigible, under all the frowns as well as patience and long-suffering of God? This pertinent question leads to another important observation.

5. That God hardened his heart. We read, "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." And we read again, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will." Pharaoh, as a man and as a king, was just as much dependent on God, as other men and other kings. His heart, therefore, was in the hand of the Lord, who had a right as well as power, to turn it whithersoever he pleased. And he was pleased to turn it against all good. God told Moses before he sent him to Pharaoh, that he *would* harden his heart; and he repeatedly told Moses after he had sent him to Pharaoh, that he *had* hardened his heart. God intended to hinder Pharaoh from granting the request of the children of Israel, until he had prepared him for his

final overthrow. And he foresaw, that nothing short of hardening his heart would fit him for that fatal event. For, the powers and faculties, which he had given him; the exalted dignity, which he had conferred upon him; and all the peculiar circumstances, under which he had placed him; would have mutually conspired to fit him for heaven, if his heart had been tender and benevolent. It is often thought and said, that nothing more was necessary on God's part, in order to fit Pharaoh for destruction, than barely to leave him to himself. But God knew, that no external means and motives would be sufficient of themselves, to form his moral character. He determined, therefore, to operate on *his heart itself*, and cause him to put forth certain *evil exercises*, in the view of certain *external motives*. When Moses called upon him to let the people go; God stood by him, and *moved* him to refuse. When Moses interceded for him and procured him respite; God stood by him, and *moved* him to exult in his obstinacy. When the people departed from his kingdom; God stood by him, and *moved* him to pursue after them, with increased malice and revenge. And what God did on such particular occasions, he did at all times. He continually hardened his heart, and governed all the exercises of his mind, from the day of his birth to the day of his death. This was absolutely necessary, to prepare him for his final state. All other methods, without this, would have failed of fitting him for destruction.

It is now time to make it appear, if possible,

III. That God is to be justified in his treatment of Pharaoh.

We must proceed upon the supposition, that God did treat him in the manner, which has been represented; and especially, that he did, among other things,



actually harden his heart. For, if this be not supposed, there is no occasion to say a single word, to justify the divine conduct, nor so much as to inquire, why it is to be justified. But supposing this to have been sufficiently proved, it may be observed,

1. That better judges, than we can pretend to be, have approved of God's treatment of Pharaoh. We find his own testimony in favor of God and against himself. In the verse before the text, God told him, that he would cut him off from the earth. And in the text, he told him that in very deed he had raised him up for this purpose. But we read afterwards in the twenty seventh verse of the context, "Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, *I have sinned* this time: The LORD IS RIGHTEOUS, and *I and my people are wicked.*" This Pharaoh said, after God had raised him up; after he had taken off restraints from his mind; after he had sent severe judgments upon him; after he had *hardened his heart*; and after he had told him, that he had raised him up to destroy him. By this time, Pharaoh was nearly ripened for ruin, and properly prepared to judge, whether God had injured *him*, or whether he had injured *God*. And he freely acknowledges, that he was *wicked*, and had injured God, and that God was *righteous*, and had never injured him. This testimony has every mark of truth and sincerity. And who shall presume to impeach the divine conduct towards Pharaoh, after he himself has publicly and solemnly justified it?

Moses and Aaron were well acquainted with the whole series of God's conduct towards Pharaoh, in the most critical and important stage of his life. God told them his ultimate design with respect to the king of Egypt. They also carried his messages to Pharaoh, and brought back his answers to God. They were

personally knowing to the mercies and judgments, which God employed to bring Pharaoh to submission and repentance; and also to the language and conduct of Pharaoh, under the divine warnings, admonitions, and corrections. They stood spectators of the last miracle of justice, by which God fulfilled his threatening to Pharaoh, and cut him off from the earth. And they were so fully persuaded of the benevolence as well as rectitude of the divine conduct, that they most cordially joined with near three millions of people in praising God for the destruction of Pharaoh and his hosts in the merciless waves. "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, saying, I will sing unto the Lord: for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. Thy right-hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: thy right-hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of *thine excellency* thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods; Who is like thee, *glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders!*" After such a solemn, public, and joyful approbation of God's treatment of Pharaoh, it must be presumption in us to call the justice, or the goodness of God in question.

But still better judges, than the leaders, elders, and tribes of Israel, have approved and applauded the divine conduct towards the hardened and incorrigible king of Egypt; I mean the saints and angels in heaven. They have sung, and will continue to sing, the *song of Moses*, at the overthrow of Pharaoh. The Apostle John tells us, that he saw not only the seven angels who had the seven last plagues, but also them that had gotten the victory over the beast standing on the sea

of glass, having the harps of God, and singing *the song of Moses* the servant of God, saying, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, *just and true are thy ways*, thou king of saints!" There is not a single instance of God's conduct since the creation of the world, which has been more universally and constantly applauded by the best judges of moral beauty and rectitude, than his raising up and destroying the cruel and incorrigible king of Egypt. We must believe, therefore, that the Judge of all the earth did right, in forming and destroying that vessel of wrath.

2. The sovereignty and justice of God allowed him to treat Pharaoh in the manner which has just been described. The Deity had a sovereign right to bring Pharaoh into existence; to give him the powers and faculties of a moral agent; to place him at the head of a kingdom; and to operate upon his heart in the same manner, in which he operated upon the hearts of other men. And when Pharaoh, under such circumstances, became extremely haughty, cruel, malevolent, and obstinate; he had a right, in point of justice, to cut him off from the earth, and send him to endless perdition. In forming Pharaoh, God displayed neither justice, or injustice, but only sovereignty. As the potter is a sovereign in forming his vessels; so God is a sovereign in forming moral agents; and after he has formed moral agents, he has a right to treat them according to their moral characters. If their moral characters are perfectly holy, God has a right to make them completely and forever happy: but if their moral characters are perfectly sinful, God has a right to make them completely and forever miserable. God formed Pharaoh a moral agent, and, as a moral agent, he was totally wicked, and deserved to be cast off forever. God, therefore, acted according to strict justice, in dooming him to

eternal destruction. Divine sovereignty was displayed in the formation, and divine justice in the destruction, of Pharaoh; and for the display of these perfections toward that son of perdition, God deserves the approbation and praise of all his intelligent creatures.

I have now finished what I proposed to say concerning God's treatment of Pharaoh. If what has been said be true, it will establish some points of serious importance upon a firmer foundation, than that of mere metaphysical arguments.

1. It appears from the divine conduct towards Pharaoh, that the doctrine of reprobation is true in fact. Pharaoh was a reprobate. God determined from eternity to make him finally miserable. This determination he eventually carried into effect. He brought him into being; formed him a rational and accountable creature; tried him with mercies and judgments; hardened his heart under both; caused him to fill up the measure of his iniquity; and finally cut him off by an act of his justice. This is all that has ever been understood by reprobation, as the counterpart of the doctrine of election. And all this God did with respect to Pharaoh, who, therefore, has every mark of a reprobate. But if God did actually reprobate Pharaoh, we may justly conclude, that he reprobated all others, whom he did not choose to eternal life. This inference the Apostle Paul draws from the fate of Pharaoh, in the ninth of Romans. "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and *whom he will he hardeneth*. Thou wilt say unto me, why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?"

Nay but, O man, who art thou that replicst against God? shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What, if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of his mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" The case of Pharaoh is here introduced, to prove and illustrate the doctrine of reprobation, as the counterpart to the doctrine of election. Pharaoh's fate proves, that God has in fact reprobated some of the human race. And God's conduct towards him illustrates his conduct towards all the vessels of wrath, who shall be fitted for destruction, in distinction from his conduct towards all the vessels of mercy, who shall be fitted for salvation. This same Apostle teaches, in various other passages in his writings, that God has reprobated all, whom he has not elected. He says to the Thessalonians, "God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." Here he supposes, that all, whom God has not appointed to salvation, he has appointed to wrath. Again he says to the Romans, "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the *election* hath obtained, and the *rest were blinded*. According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap and a stumbling-block, and a recompence unto them. Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway." His meaning

is, let every thing serve to blind and harden reprobate sinners, and fit them for final destruction. The Apostle Peter represents the doctrine of reprobation in direct contrast with the doctrine of election. He says to christians in general, "Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore *which believe* he is precious: but unto them *which be disobedient*, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, *even to them that stumble* at the word, being *disobedient*, whereunto *also they were appointed*." Our Savior, likewise, in the course of his preaching, taught the doctrine of reprobation in plain and pointed terms. He publicly called Judas before his death, "the son of perdition." He told some of his obstinate hearers, that he came into the world to save the elect, and to destroy the non-elect. "Jesus said, For judgment I am come into the world: that they which see not might see, and that they which see *might be made blind*." And it appears that his miracles and preaching had this effect upon those, who were given up to a *reprobate* spirit. "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him; That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." Scripture facts and declarations give us no more room to doubt, whether God has *reprobated* some, than

whether he has *elect*ed others; nor whether he will eventually destroy all the *reprobate*, than whether he will eventually save all the *elect*. Though multitudes may dislike the doctrine of reprobation; yet none have a right to say, that this solemn and important doctrine is not plainly revealed in the Scriptures of truth.

2. This instance of Pharaoh removes all the objections which ever have been, or which ever can be made against the doctrine of reprobation. Many have exerted the whole force of their minds, to devise plausible objections against this unpalatable doctrine. But all that has been or can be said against it, stands refuted by the fate of Pharaoh: he was a reprobate.

It is said, if God has reprobated a certain number of mankind, then he can have no other end in bringing those persons into existence, than merely to destroy them; which is totally inconsistent with true benevolence.

Though God always intended to destroy Pharaoh, yet he had a wise and benevolent design in giving him existence. He meant that he should act an important part on the stage of life, and be greatly instrumental in promoting the benevolent designs of providence. This God told him before he destroyed him. "For now will I stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and *thou shalt be cut off from the earth*. And in very deed *for this cause* have I raised thee up, *for to show in thee my power*; and *that my name may be declared throughout all the earth*." God made Pharaoh for himself, as well as for the day of evil. And he would not have made him for the day of evil, had it not been necessary, in order to declare his own glory. God has the same end to answer, by bringing all the non-elect into existence. He intends they shall be the means of dis-

playing his own glory, both in time and eternity. And what, if God, willing to shew his wrath, and make his power known on the vessels of wrath, bring them into existence for this noble and important purpose, who may or ought to object? The glory of God is the highest and best end he could propose in the creation of the world. And if he originally intended, and will finally make the non-elect subservient to this end, his benevolence will as clearly appear, in reprobating some to eternal perdition, as in electing others to eternal life.

It is said, the doctrine of reprobation is inconsistent with free agency, because it implies, that God has decreed all the actions of those, whom he has appointed to destruction; which lays them under a fatal necessity of pursuing the path to ruin.

This objection is contrary to fact. Pharaoh was a reprobate. His actions were decreed and predicted. God foredetermined and foretold how he should act; and he did act according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. But it appears from the whole history of his life, that he acted as freely and voluntarily as any other man in the world. Did he not act freely in commanding the midwives to destroy every male among the Hebrew children? Did he not act freely in refusing to obey the messages of heaven, by the mouth of Moses? Did he not act freely in appointing task-masters to increase the burdens and distresses of the children of Israel? Did he not act freely in confessing his faults to Moses, and in begging him to intercede for him at the throne of divine grace? Did he not act freely in forbidding Moses to see his face any more? Did he not act freely afterwards, in not only permitting, but urging the Israelites to leave his kingdom? And after they had left it, did he not act freely



in pursuing them into the Red Sea, where he finished his course and met his fate? It is impossible to conceive, that Pharaoh should have enjoyed more liberty or moral freedom, than he actually did enjoy, while performing those very actions, which were the appointed means of his destruction. He acted freely and voluntarily all his life, under a divine decree, and under a divine influence. Though *God* hardened his heart, yet *he* hardened his own heart, and freely walked "in the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." Here, then, it appears to be true in fact, that the doctrine of reprobation is perfectly consistent with free agency. The case of Pharaoh is exactly similar to the case of all other reprobates. And if the decree of reprobation did not destroy *his* moral freedom, it cannot destroy the moral freedom of any one of the non-elect.

It is said, the doctrine of reprobation is inconsistent with the use of means. If God has decreed that any should finally perish, it is vain and absurd to use any means in order to their salvation.

This objection is founded upon the preceding, and if there is no foundation for *that*, there is none for *this*. If the decree of reprobation does not destroy free agency, then it does not destroy the use of means. If reprobates remain free agents, then there is a great propriety in treating them as such, and in exhibiting before them all the motives of the gospel, to lead them to repentance. But it is sufficient to say, that God used means with Pharaoh, to bring him to good, though he had determined to destroy him. He admonished him of his duty and of his danger; he visited him with mercies and judgments; he employed Moses and Aaron, and even his own subjects, to persuade him to submission; and he delayed to cut him off from the earth,

until it clearly appeared, that all means and motives served to harden his heart and increase his obstinacy. This instance of the divine conduct towards a reprobate, demonstrates the propriety of using all the means of grace with reprobates. God addressed the understanding, the conscience, and the heart of Pharaoh, and used every method proper to be used, to bring any obstinate sinner to repentance. Reprobates are as capable of feeling the force of moral motives, as any other men in the world; and, therefore, it is as proper to use the means of grace with the non-elect, as with the elect. So God teaches, by his word and by his conduct.

It is said, the doctrine of reprobation carries the idea of partiality, which is a reproach to the divine character.

This objection is contrary to plain fact. God did reprobate Pharaoh; and in doing it, he displayed his sovereignty, not his partiality. God has a right to treat his creatures differently, when he sees it will answer a wise and benevolent purpose. And he told Pharaoh, that he had such a good design in decreeing his destruction. "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." But if God had a wise and benevolent purpose in reprobating Pharaoh; then he must have had the same noble and important end in reprobating all the non-elect. And this excludes every idea of partiality from the doctrine of reprobation. For partiality consists, not merely in treating one person differently from another; but in treating one person differently from another, *without any reason*.

I might go on stating and answering objections against the doctrine of reprobation, but I forbear. The single instance of Pharaoh will apply to, and completely

answer, every objection, which can be made against God's choosing some to eternal life, and reprobating others to everlasting perdition. Pharaoh himself once and again *justified God* and *condemned himself*. And all reprobates will sooner or later be obliged to adopt his sentiments and speak his language. A strong and irresistible conviction of their own guilt, and of the divine rectitude in foreordaining their existence, their character, and their condition, will give a peculiar emphasis to that last sentence, which will fix them in everlasting darkness and despair.

3. If God is to be justified in his treatment of Pharaoh, whom he predestinated to eternal destruction; then it argues much more modesty, to maintain the doctrine of reprobation, than to deny it. It is very often thought and said, that it betrays arrogance and presumption in ignorant and short-sighted creatures, to pry into the divine counsels, and teach the doctrine of divine decrees, especially the most obnoxious and mysterious part of it, that of reprobation. But how does it appear to be any more prying into the divine counsels, to *assert*, than to *deny*, this doctrine? And how does it appear any more arrogant and presumptuous, to *assert*, than to *deny* any thing respecting the Deity. The truth is, arrogance consists in denying what God has asserted; but modesty in believing and maintaining it. And upon this principle, it argues real modesty to believe and maintain the doctrine of reprobation, which God has plainly revealed in his word. It is subjecting our wisdom to his wisdom, and our partial feelings to his infinite benevolence. But it is hard to conceive how there can be the least degree of modesty in denying what God has asserted, and in being wise above what he has written. This is real arrogance and presumption, in whomsoever it is found.

4. If it be true, that God is to be justified in foreordaining the destruction of the non-elect; then it is altogether proper and necessary to preach the doctrine of reprobation. It seems to be a prevailing opinion among many, who acknowledge the doctrine of reprobation is contained in the Bible, that it is unnecessary and improper for public teachers to insist upon it, in their public discourses. They say, that this doctrine is dark and mysterious; that it is discouraging to sinners; that it tends to lead them into despair; that it is apt to give them false and disagreeable ideas of the divine character. For these reasons, they think it is a more wise and prudent practice in preachers, either never to mention the doctrine of reprobation, or if they mention it, not to dwell upon it, or attempt to inculcate it as an article of faith. But is this christian prudence? Is this declaring all the counsel of God? Is this speaking on God's behalf? Is this giving sinners an opportunity of knowing whether they love or hate their Creator? There is no divine truth, which is more directly suited to discover the hearts of sinners to themselves than the doctrine of reprobation. It never fails to awaken their native enmity to the divine character. God may visit them with mercies, or with judgments, and they may still remain ignorant of their hearts. Ministers may preach the terrors of the law, and the gracious invitations of the gospel, and they still remain unacquainted with their real character and condition. But when the doctrine of reprobation is clearly exhibited before them, they cannot help discovering the plague of their own hearts. They cannot endure the thought, that God has determined their character and condition for eternity; and will according to his eternal purpose, either soften or harden their hearts, and either fit them for heaven or for hell. They cannot

bear to be treated as God treated Pharaoh, and Judas, and others, who were predestinated to eternal destruction. If it be a matter of importance, therefore, that sinners should be made acquainted with the character of God and with their own character; then it is a matter of equal importance, that the doctrine of reprobation should be clearly and fully exhibited. This doctrine cannot be preached too plainly. It ought to be represented as God's eternal and effectual purpose to destroy the non-elect. God could not reprobate any from eternity, without intending to carry his eternal purpose into execution. Such is the nature and extent of the doctrine of reprobation; which displays the feelings of God's heart towards that portion of mankind, who will be finally lost. And these feelings are his true glory, which he means should be fully displayed. To use his own expression, "God is not ashamed" of the doctrine of reprobation. He means to have it known, that he raised up one and another of our fallen race, for final destruction, that his name may be declared throughout all the earth. And shall his servants, who are set apart to delineate his character, and explain his word, be ashamed to teach a doctrine, which is designed to give the most bright and affecting display of his glory?

5. If God is to be justified in his treatment of Pharaoh and of all the rest of the non-elect; then it is absolutely necessary to approve of the doctrine of reprobation, in order to be saved. None can be admitted to heaven, who are not prepared to join in the employments as well as enjoyments of the heavenly world. And we know, that one part of the business of the blessed is to celebrate the doctrine of reprobation. They sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, which is an anthem of praise for the destruction of Pharaoh

and his reprobate host. How, then, can any be meet for an inheritance among the saints in light, who are not reconciled to the doctrine of reprobation, which is, and which will be forever, celebrated there?

While the decree of reprobation is eternally executing on the vessels of wrath, the smoke of their torments will be eternally ascending in the view of the vessels of mercy, who, instead of taking the part of those miserable objects, will say, Amen, alleluia, praise ye the Lord. It concerns, therefore, all the expectants of heaven, to anticipate this trying scene, and ask their hearts, whether they are on the Lord's side, and can praise him for reprobating as well as electing love: This is the most proper subject, by which to try their christian character. They must sooner or later be brought to this touch-stone, and either stand, or fall by it. The day of decision is at hand. The scenes of eternity will soon open to view. And those who cannot heartily and joyfully sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, must be excluded from the abodes of the blessed, and sink speechless into the bottomless pit of despair.

## SERMON XVII.

### ON THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

1 JOHN v, 16.

*There is a sin unto death.*

THE Apostle is here speaking upon the subject of prayer. He encourages all who believe in Christ, to call upon God with freedom and confidence. He assures them, if they pray according to the will of God, either for themselves or others, their prayers shall certainly be heard and answered. But he observes, it is not their duty to pray for any who are known to have committed the sin unto death, because that is a peculiar sin, which God has determined never to forgive. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. *There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.* All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death." According to this representation of the sin unto death, it is evidently that sin, which our Savior said should never be forgiven, and that which is commonly called the *Unpardonable Sin*. Here it may be proper, first, to point out the peculiar properties of this sin; and, then, to inquire why it is unpardonable.

Though few, perhaps, have ever committed the unpardonable sin; yet many have been greatly exercised with apprehensions of its guilt, and some have been driven to the very borders of despair. Careless and stupid persons have but little dread of sinning the sin unto death; but those of a more tender conscience and gloomy cast of mind, are extremely prone to imagine, that they have actually sinned beyond the reach of pardoning mercy. It is, therefore, of practical importance, to say something upon this subject, which is suited to remove the groundless fears of some, and to prevent the fatal presumption of others. And for this purpose, it is very necessary,

I. To point out the peculiar properties of the sin unto death. And here I would observe,

1. This sin is directly pointed against the Holy Ghost. Though there be but one true God; yet the Scripture represents the one true God, as existing in three distinct Persons. These are called the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and represented, as bearing distinct parts in the work of our redemption. Hence one sin may be more directly pointed against the Father; another more directly pointed against the Son; and another more directly pointed against the Holy Ghost. The transgression of the divine law seems to be more directly pointed against the person of the Father, who assumes the character of Lawgiver. Unbelief more immediately dishonors the person of the Son, who claims the character of Mediator. And open opposition to the appearance of holiness more especially reproaches the person of the Holy Ghost, who performs the office of Sanctifier.

Our Savior, speaking of the unpardonable sin, observes this distinction of persons in the Godhead; and, represents it, as more directly pointed against the Holy



Ghost, than against either of the other persons in the sacred Trinity. In the twelfth chapter of Matthew we read, "They brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them—Wherefore, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." Our Savior wrought miracles, by the power of the Holy Ghost; and accordingly he considers the Scribes and Pharisees as blaspheming the Holy Ghost, by ascribing a miracle wrought by his divine influence, to the power and agency of the devil. And he repeatedly declares, that their sin was unpardonable, not because it was pointed against himself, but against the Holy Ghost. "Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him." And to make the distinction plainer still, he says, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." According to this infallible description of the sin unto death, it is always directly pointed against the Holy Ghost.

2. The sin, which shall never be forgiven, is a sin of the Tongue. This appears from the express declara-

tions of Christ. In the twelfth of Luke, he says, "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that *blasphemeth* against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven." And in the third of Mark, he conveys the same idea, in plainer and stronger terms; "Verily I say unto you, *All* sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and *blasphemies* wherewith soever they shall *blaspheme*: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness." The evangelist adds, "Because they *said*, He hath an unclean spirit." Though they had inwardly felt the keenest malice against Christ, yet, if "they had not *said*, he hath an unclean spirit," they would not have *blasphemed* the Holy Ghost, by whom he wrought miracles, nor consequently have been guilty of the unpardonable sin. Blasphemy properly consists in *evil speaking*, and can be committed *only in words*. Though there is a multitude of ways of *dishonoring* the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; yet there is but one way of *blaspheming* these divine Persons, and that is by *speaking* reproachfully of them. And since our Savior expressly says, that the sin unto death consists in *blaspheming* the Holy Ghost, we may safely conclude, the unpardonable sin is always a sin of the tongue. This leads me to observe,

3. That the sin, which shall never be forgiven, is a *public* and not a *secret* sin. Some sins can be committed only in public. The sin of slander, for instance, is of a public nature. One man cannot slander another in secret. The essence of slander consists in one man's speaking falsely of another, with a view to injure his character. But no man can injure another's character, without speaking against it in public: or at least so as to be heard by somebody besides himself. So blas-

phemy against the Holy Ghost is a *public* and not a *secret* sin. When the Scribes and Pharisees committed this sin, they spake against the Holy Ghost before a multitude of people, with a malicious design of sinking his character and miraculous operations, in the view of the world. And no man, at this day, can be guilty of the unpardonable sin, without *blaspheming* the Holy Ghost *in public*, or speaking against his peculiar operations, *in the hearing of others*. The Apostle, in our context, cautions christians against praying for those whom they *know* to be guilty of the sin unto death. "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is *not* unto death, *he shall ask*, and he shall give him life for them that sin *not* unto death. There is a sin unto death; *I do not say that he shall pray for it.*" This caution, in this connexion, plainly supposes, that the sin unto death is an *open, public* sin, which is known to others, as well as to the guilty person.

4. The sin unto death cannot be committed, without knowledge of a certain kind. Some suppose, that high attainments in human learning, and high degrees of divine illumination, are necessary to render men capable of committing the unpardonable sin. But there seems to be no ground for this supposition. For, the Scribes and Pharisees, who charged Christ with having an unclean spirit, and blasphemed the Holy Ghost, by ascribing his operations to the power and agency of the devil, appear to have been no other than the most *ignorant* and *stupid* sinners. And it is, indeed, much easier to conceive, that the most *ignorant* and *stupid* sinners should be guilty of committing the sin under death; than to conceive, that the most *enlightened* and *convinced* sinners should openly and directly *blaspheme* the ever blessed Spirit.

There is, however, a *certain kind of knowledge*, without which the unpardonable sin cannot be committed; I mean *the knowledge of the Holy Ghost and of his peculiar operations*. In the economy of redemption, it is the peculiar office of the Holy Spirit, to bestow spiritual gifts, and to produce holiness or gracious affections in the human heart. Accordingly we read, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness." And again we are told, "To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kind of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues. But all these worketh that one and self same Spirit, dividing to every man severally, as he will." Now, a person must *know* these peculiar operations of the Holy Ghost, in order to be capable of committing the unpardonable sin. For the unpardonable sin consists in ascribing any of these peculiar effects of the divine Spirit, to the power and operation of the devil. The Scribes and Pharisees committed the sin unto death, by ascribing the supernatural effect of the Holy Ghost to an *unclean spirit* contrary to the knowledge and conviction of their own minds. And it seems as though nothing but *ignorance* prevented Paul from committing the sin unto death. He was actually guilty of *blasphemy*. This he freely acknowledges; but he says, "I obtained mercy, because I did it *ignorantly*, in unbelief." Had he, contrary to his own knowledge, called Christ an impostor, and ascribed his miracles, or the miracles of his Apostles, to the power and influence of Satan, he would have *blasphemed* the Holy Ghost, and put himself beyond the reach of pardoning mercy. No person can *ignorantly* com-

mit the unpardonable sin. *He must have the knowledge of the Holy Ghost and of his peculiar operations;* in order to be capable of committing the sin; which shall never be forgiven. I may add,

5. The sin unto death always springs from sensible enmity against the truth and spirit of christianity. The external sin of blasphemy has its origin in a corrupt and malignant heart. Hence our Lord declares; that "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, *blasphemies.*" We cannot conceive, that any person should knowingly *blaspheme* the Holy Ghost, by ascribing his peculiar operations to the agency of the devil, unless he felt sensible enmity of heart against the *Holy Ghost* and *his holy operations*. But we can easily conceive, that sinners should feel such enmity of heart against the truth and spirit of christianity, as knowingly and maliciously to blaspheme the Holy Ghost. Elymas the sorcerer, whilst he withstood the Apostles, and endeavored to turn away the Deputy from the faith, felt a malignant opposition to the truth and spirit of the gospel. This appears from his own conduct, and from that severe and pointed reproof, which was given him by Paul. "Then Saul (who is also called Paul) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes upon him, and said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou *enemy of all righteousness*; wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" Since we have no account of what Elymas did or *said*, we cannot determine, whether he did, or did not, commit the unpardonable sin; but this we may certainly conclude, that his heart was malignant enough, to blaspheme the Holy Ghost. Though mere malignity of heart does not amount to the unpardonable sin; yet nothing but malignity of

heart, can ever prompt any person knowingly and maliciously to *blaspheme* the Holy Ghost, by ascribing his holy and supernatural operations to the agency of Satan.

Having described the sin unto death, I proceed to inquire,

II. Why it is unpardonable.

That the sin we have described is unpardonable, there is not the least reason to doubt; since the Apostle calls it *the sin unto death*; and since our Savior says, *it shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, neither in the world to come*. We have only to inquire, therefore, why this sin in particular shall never be forgiven.

Here it is natural to observe, in the first place, that blasphemy against the Holy Ghost cannot be unpardonable, on account of *any deficiency* in the atonement of Christ. The Scripture represents Christ as a complete and all-sufficient Savior. He is said to "taste death for every man." He is said to be "the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." He is said to be "the propitiation for the sins of the whole world." And it is said, that "his blood cleanseth from *all sin*." By dying the just for the unjust, he made a complete atonement for all mankind, and rendered it consistent with the character and government of God, to forgive the *greatest* as well as the *smallest* sinners. Though one sin may be greater than another, and though blasphemy against the Holy Ghost may be the greatest of all sins; yet the blood of Christ is as sufficient to cleanse from *this*, as from any other sin. This sin, therefore, cannot be unpardonable, on account of any deficiency in the atonement of Christ. And it is no less evident, in the next place, that it cannot be unpardonable, on account of any insurmount-

able difficulty in the way, of bringing the guilty person to repentance. It is true, some sinners are more hardened than others, and, perhaps, blasphemers are, of all sinners the most hardened and obstinate; yet there is no reason to imagine, that God is unable to conquer the stoutest human heart. He subdued the malignant heart of Manasseh. He softened the hard heart of the murmuring Jews in Babylon. He cleansed the foul heart of Mary Magdalene. And, what is still more striking, he awakened, convinced, and converted Paul, who had been an injurious persecutor, and a profane *blasphemer*. God is able, in the day of his power, to make any sinner willing to repent. If he saw fit to pardon blasphemers against the Holy Ghost, he could and would bring them to unfeigned repentance. It is not, therefore, in the least degree owing to any peculiar or insurmountable difficulty in the way of God's bringing *blasphemers* to repentance, that the sin against the Holy Ghost is unpardonable.

But if the atonement of Christ be sufficient for the pardon of the greatest sins, and if God be able to bring the greatest sinners to repentance, why is the particular sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost unpardonable? I answer, *Because it hath pleased God, by a positive determination, to make it so.* And though we may not be able to comprehend all the reasons, which moved him to make this determination; yet there appears to be one plain and sufficient reason, for his absolutely refusing to pardon any person, who *blasphemeth the Holy Ghost*. It is the natural tendency of ascribing the peculiar operations of the Holy Ghost, to the power and agency of Satan, to prevent the spread of the Gospel, and the conversion of sinners. *To say*, that Christ, who had the Spirit without measure, wrought all his miracles by the influence of Satan,

had a direct tendency to destroy his religion, and to make him appear, in the eye of the world, as a vile and odious impostor. *To say*, that the Apostles, who went forth, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, to preach the gospel and to work miracles, were instigated and assisted, by the power of the Devil, had the same tendency to defeat their whole design; for they had no higher credentials of their divine mission, than the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, and the efficacy of the Gospel upon the hearts of men. *To say* at this day, when there is a great effusion of the Spirit, and a great revival of religion, that these effects are owing to the power and delusion of Satan, is directly calculated to prevent the spread of christianity and the salvation of sinners. And to ascribe the peculiar operations of the Spirit to the influence of the Devil, in any future period, must equally tend to subvert the evidence and design of the Gospel. Therefore, to keep the world in awe, God has set a dreadful mark of distinction upon *blasphemy* against the Holy Ghost, and made it DEATH, without reprieve!

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from the description, which has been given of the unpardonable sin, that the two noted passages, in the sixth and tenth of Hebrews, have no reference to it. To make this appear, it is necessary to recite these texts at large, and consider them distinctly. The first is this, "For it is impossible for those that were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify unto themselves the son of God afresh, and put him to an



open shame." The second, which follows, is very similar. "For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified; an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace."

These texts have often been supposed to be descriptive of the unpardonable sin; and in this view, they have given great distress to awakened sinners, laboring under a deep sense of their own vileness and the divine displeasure. But there appears to be no reason to understand these passages in this sense. There is a very great dissimilarity between the sins here described, and that which has been described in this discourse. The sins here described appear to be secret sins; but the unpardonable sin can be committed in public only. The sins here described appear to be sins of the heart; but the unpardonable sin is a sin of the tongue. The sins here described appear to consist in internal opposition to truth and holiness; but the unpardonable sin consists in nothing but *blasphemy* directly pointed against the Holy Ghost. In short, there is no mention, nor description of the unpardonable sin in these passages, and therefore, there is no ground to suppose, that the Apostle is here speaking to *sinners*, and warning them against the sin of *blasphemy* against the Holy Ghost; which consists in ascribing his peculiar operations to the power and agency of Satan. But on the other hand, the Apostle appears to be speaking to

*saints*, and warning them against the guilt and danger of *final apostasy*. This is the sin, which he expressly mentions, and which is peculiar to *saints*. Though sinners may quench the Spirit, stifle convictions, and run to the greatest excess in wickedness; yet they cannot irrecoverably fall away, this side of eternity. Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, and many other loose and abandoned sinners, have been converted from the error of their ways, and brought to genuine repentance. But *if* real saints should be guilty of falling away from the faith and practice of christianity, they would sin beyond repentance and pardon. Accordingly the persons, whom the Apostle addresses in these passages, appear to be real saints; for none but such ever arrived at those high attainments, which he expressly mentions. It is peculiar to saints, "to receive the knowledge of the truth; to be divinely enlightened; to taste of the heavenly gift, to be partakers of the Holy Ghost; to taste the good word of God and the powers of the world to come." Persons of this character, may be properly warned of the danger of falling away. It is the language of both the Old and New Testament, that if real saints should renounce religion, they would be infallibly lost. The Prophet Ezekiel says, "When the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in the sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die." Our Lord says, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered: and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." And Paul says, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when

I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." It appears from these representations, that if real saints should totally apostatize from their faith and profession, they would never be recovered from their apostasy, but eventually perish. And this is the very sentiment contained in the passages under consideration. But some may ask, Is not the danger of saints' falling away, inconsistent with the doctrine of their *final perseverance*? I answer, No. David was in danger of being slain by Saul, who determined, if possible, to take away his life. And he realized his danger, when he said, "Surely I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." And there is no doubt but he would have actually fallen by the hand of Saul, if he had not taken peculiar care and precaution, to escape his subtle stratagems and violent assaults. But all the while Saul was pursuing David, and attempting to destroy him, it was absolutely certain, that David should live, and succeed him on the throne of Israel. For God had anointed David, to be ruler over his people, and had promised to put the reins of government into his hands. So God has promised to keep all true saints from actual apostasy, and to conduct them safely to his heavenly kingdom. But though the power and faithfulness of God be engaged in their favor; yet they must watch, and pray, and take heed, lest they fall. And upon this principle, the Apostle solemnly warns them, in the texts under consideration, not against the unpardonable sin in particular, but against the sin of final apostasy, or a total renunciation of christianity.

2. If what has been said is true, then sinners have no ground to imagine, that they have committed the unpardonable sin, because they have *inwardly* opposed God, and resisted the strivings of the Spirit. No

inward exercises of heart, however strong and sensible and criminal, ever amount to the sin unto death; which is an external sin of the tongue. Though sinners under the strivings of the Spirit, do actually feel enmity against God, and sensibly resist convictions; yet so long as they suppress their feelings, and never utter them in *blasphemy* against the Holy Ghost, they do not sin unto death. All sinners are totally depraved. They have a carnal mind which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. It is their nature, therefore, always to resist the Holy Ghost, and endeavor to stifle convictions. They hate the light, and are extremely unwilling to come to the light, lest their hearts should be discovered, and their deeds reprov'd. But under the awakening and convincing influences of the Spirit, they are obliged to come to the light; and in this situation, it is as natural for their hearts to rise in direct and violent opposition to God and divine truth, as for a corrupt fountain to send forth corrupt streams. There are, indeed, no thoughts nor exercises of heart too malignant for them to feel, in the clear view of their guilt and danger. They may hate their own existence, and wish to be annihilated. They may hate the divine existence, and wish to dethrone and destroy the Most High. But neither these, nor any other *internal* exercises of the carnal mind, partake of the nature of the unpardonable sin; which essentially consists in blasphemous *words*, and not in blasphemous *thoughts*. There is reason to believe, that some persons, who have felt the most malignant exercises of heart, have, notwithstanding, obtained the pardoning mercy of God. It is certain, however, that some eminent christians in appearance, have given this account of themselves; and there is nothing in Scripture nor rea-

son, to contradict their account. Though it be extremely criminal to quench the Spirit and stifle convictions; yet there is nothing unpardonable in such inward exercises of heart. Those sinners, therefore, who are conscious of the most malignant feelings towards God and divine objects, have no right to conclude, that they have committed the sin unto death, and put themselves beyond the reach of divine mercy.

3. If what has been said is true, then it is altogether criminal for any to despair of salvation, who have not committed the unpardonable sin. Since God has promised to pardon all penitent sinners, except *blasphemers* against the Holy Ghost, it must be altogether criminal in any others, to despair of forgiveness, on account of the *greatness* of their guilt. So long as sinners remain secure and stupid, they are too apt to *presume* upon the mercy of God; but when they are awakened to attend to their *hearts*, and to the nature, number, and aggravations of their sins, they are too prone to *despair* of salvation. They appear to themselves so vile and guilty, that they imagine a holy and just God, *must* make them completely and eternally miserable. But these apprehensions are altogether groundless and criminal. What if they have cast off fear, and restrained prayer; what if they have walked in the ways of their heart, and in the sight of their eyes; what if they have said to God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways; what if they have hated instruction, and despised reproof; what if they have resisted the Spirit, and rejected the counsel of God against themselves; yea, what if in reality they are the very chief of sinners; yet if they *now* heartily repent, and return to God upon his own terms, he will freely and abundantly pardon. For he makes no distinction between *great* sinners and *small*, in the

offers of salvation. He freely promises forgiveness and acceptance to all who repent, and submit to the terms of life. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as *scarlet*, they shall be as *white as snow*; though they be *red like crimson*, they shall be as *wool*." The more the guilt of sinners has abounded, the more the grace of God can abound in their forgiveness. Those, who have indulged the most virulent enmity against God, and the cause and friends of Christ, may, like penitent Paul, obtain mercy. Those, who have long abused the patience of God, and grown gray in their sins, may, like penitent Manasseh, be received at the eleventh hour. The vilest sinner, upon repentance, may turn the greatness of his guilt into an argument of mercy, and in the language of David say, "Lord, pardon mine iniquity, *for it is great*." To despair of salvation, therefore, on account of aggravated guilt, is extremely criminal in the most ill deserving sinners. Their despondency is a reproach both to the mercy and faithfulness of God. It is so far from being an expression of real humility, that, on the other hand, it is a real justification of their *present* impenitency and unbelief. It is a practical declaration, that they would rather it should be owing to *past*, than to *present* obstinacy; that they are denied divine mercy. But God has ordered it so in the gospel, that nothing but *present* opposition to the offers of life, can exclude the most unworthy and guilty sinner from the kingdom of heaven. All things are ready on God's part; and, therefore, let sinners, instead of murmuring and desponding, "hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption."

4. If blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven; then it seriously concerns all sinners

to beware of committing this unpardonable sin. It appears from what has been said, that it is a sin, which may be committed, at this day, as well as in the primitive days of christianity. It consists in ascribing the *peculiar operations* of the Holy Ghost, to the power and agency of Satan. And though the *miraculous gifts* of the Spirit have long since ceased; yet his *gracious* and *sanctifying* influences still continue. There have been many remarkable seasons of the outpourings of the Spirit, in these latter ages. And should such a season come again, in this land, when the awakening, convincing, converting, and comforting influences of the Spirit, should be very common and very powerful; and should any virulently oppose this good work of the good Spirit, and *knowingly* ascribe it to the power and delusion of Satan; there is no reason to doubt but they would *blaspheme* the Holy Ghost, and bring upon themselves *unpardonable* guilt. It behoves sinners, therefore, to keep at the greatest distance from this fatal sin. Let them avoid all appearances of it, and shun every way of sinning, which leads to it, or stands more nearly connected with it. In particular, let them beware of despising religion; of trifling with the name of God; and of profaning his day, his house, his word and sacred ordinances. The transition is easy from these sins to the sin unto death. Those who have habituated themselves to despise and profane divine objects in general, are in peculiar danger of *blaspheming* the Holy Ghost in particular, whenever they have an opportunity of seeing his peculiar and powerful operations upon the hearts of men. Let no sinners, therefore, dare to trifle with sacred things; lest they should be left in awful judgment to themselves, to *speak a word* against the Holy Ghost, which is *death* without reprieve!

## SERMON XVIII.

### THE TRUE CHARACTER OF GOOD MEN DELINEATED.

ROMANS vii, 18.

*For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not.*

IT is a question among expositors, whether the Apostle is here expressing the pious feelings of his own heart; or whether he is here describing the feelings of a person destitute of grace. To determine this point, it seems necessary to examine the context, which is the best way to discover his true meaning. From the seventh to the ninth verse, he describes the exercises of his own mind, before he was awakened from his carnal ease and stupidity. "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Nay, I had not known sin but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin taking occasion by the commandment wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once." This exactly agrees with another description, which he gives of himself, while in the state of nature. "If any man thinketh, that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more. Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." Such was his character and his opinion of himself, before he knew the grace of God in truth. But after his



these, by the supposition, are always partly sinful, and consequently partial. But do christians, in fact, find such a difficulty in determining, whether they are more criminal at one time than at another? or whether they love God less at one time than another? We venture to say, that they do not. They find a sensible difference in the *nature* of their affections, at different times; and this affords them their best evidence, that they are real friends to God, and stand entitled to his favor. The notion, therefore, that the imperfection of saints arises from their moral affections being all partly holy and partly sinful, is contrary to reason, Scripture, and their own experience. But,

*Thirdly.* If the moral imperfection of good men cannot arise from their affections being too low and languid, nor from their being partly holy and partly sinful, then it must follow, that their imperfection arises from their having some *sinful* as well as some *holy* affections. If all their moral exercises were perfectly holy, they could not be justly considered as morally imperfect creatures in this life, any more than in the next. But if only a part of their moral exercises are perfectly holy, and the rest are perfectly sinful, then they are criminally imperfect. For all *unholy* affections *in them* are no less, if not more criminal, than they would be *in other men*. But to make it more fully appear, that the imperfection of saints does consist *in the inconstancy* of their holy affections, or in their having *some bad* as well as *some good* affections, I would observe,

1. That saints do have *some perfectly good affections*. God who knows their hearts, approves of some of their affections. He approved of Abel's faith. He approved of Abraham's self-denial. He approved of David's good design of building the temple. And we find

many other instances of God's approving of the desires, affections, and purposes of good men. But God is of purer eyes than to approve of any thing really sinful. There must be, therefore, some perfectly holy affections in the hearts of saints. And this they know to be true, by their own experience. They are conscious of loving God, and of desiring to promote his glory. Joshua was conscious of such exercises, when he said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Peter appears to have been conscious of sincere love to Christ, when he answered his trying question, with so much solemnity and confidence. "Yea, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest *that I love thee.*" Paul also was conscious of having some right affection of heart, when he said in the text, "*For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not.*" Saints, then, with all their imperfections, have some perfectly right and holy exercises of heart, which meet the approbation of God and of their own consciences. But,

2. It is no less evident, that they have some affections, which are altogether unholy and sinful. These they not only feel, but often express. Moses was angry; for he spake unadvisedly with his lips. Hezekiah was proud; for his heart was lifted up, and he boasted of his riches. And David acknowledges that he was envious at the prosperity of the wicked. All saints are conscious of having such affections as these, which are perfectly sinful. And all their moral imperfection consists in such positively evil exercises of heart. For,

3. There is nothing else, which prevents their being as perfectly holy and free from sin, as the saints and angels in heaven. This the Apostle most clearly illustrates by his own feelings. He was capable of observing the inward motions and exercises of his mind,

and of relating them clearly and intelligibly. Let us bear what he says in the text and context. "For *to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil that I would not, that do I. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members.*" Here the Apostle tells us, that he had good affections sometimes, and then he really desired and intended to do good; but yet he did not fulfil his resolutions. The reason was, that when the time came in which he intended to do certain good deeds, evil affections were present with him, and prevented him from doing the duties, which he had previously resolved to do. His bad affections prevented his having good affections. For, if his good affections had continued, nothing could have prevented him from performing what he had intended to perform. According to his own account of the exercises of his heart, his *good* exercises excluded *bad* ones, and his *bad* affections excluded *good* ones. His *holy* affections were *inconstant*, being interrupted by the intervention of opposite views and feelings. He complains of nothing but bad exercises of heart, and seems to be confident, that, if only these could be removed, he should be perfectly holy and happy. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It further appears from what he says concerning his different affections, that his holy and sinful exercises were entirely distinct from each other. "If then I do that which I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." His meaning cannot be, that he did what he would not, in the time of acting. For this

would imply, that he did not act voluntarily; that is, did not act at all. He must intend, therefore, by this mode of expression, that he voluntarily did what he had before determined not to do; or that he freely violated his own virtuous resolutions. This, indeed, is the natural consequence of having good affections and bad affections one after another, in alternate succession. If now we may judge of other saints by Paul, we may safely conclude, that their moral imperfection wholly consists in their positively sinful exercises of heart. And this is agreeable to the whole current of Scripture, which represents holiness, as excluding sin, and sin as excluding holiness in the human heart. When God predicted the conversion of the Jews in Babylon, he promised to *take away* their stony hearts, *by giving them* hearts of flesh. And when saints are exhorted to grow in grace, they are commanded to *put away* bad affections, *by exercising good ones*. Thus we read, "If ye *through the spirit*, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." The Apostle says to the christians at Corinth, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us *cleanse ourselves* from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, *perfecting holiness* in the fear of the Lord." This supposes, that the *increase* of holiness would necessarily be the *decrease* of sin. The same idea the Apostle more fully expresses in the fourth chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians. "*Put off* concerning the former conversation, *the old man*, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and *be renewed* in the spirit of your mind; and *put on* the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." We find a similar exhortation to saints in the third chapter of Colossians. "But now ye also *put off* all these, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy commu-

surd, because if it be true, then *saints* are sometimes *sinner*s, and just like the rest of the wicked world.

This objection is more ambiguous than pertinent. Saint signifies a *holy*, and sinner a *sinful*, character. But a single volition, or a single external action, does not form a character, which is always founded on a course of conduct. One man is called industrious, and another is called idle. But the character of the industrious man is founded on a general habit, and not on a particular instance of industry; and the character of the idle man is founded on a general habit, and not on a particular instance of idleness. These cases will apply to saints and sinners. A saint is one, who habitually obeys, though he sometimes disobeys, the divine commands. A sinner is one, who habitually disobeys God, and never does any thing pleasing in his sight. Though a saint, therefore, may sometimes feel and act just like a sinner; yet he deserves not the *character* of a sinner, because he habitually feels and acts very differently from a total enmity to God. An industrious man may be idle, and feel and act just like an idle man, for a few moments or a few hours; but it would be extremely absurd to give him the *character* of an idle man, on account of such particular instances of idleness. He has the habit of industry, and will continue habitually industrious, through the course of his life. So the saint, who is imperfect, and sometimes feels and acts like a sinner, will continue habitually holy and obedient to the end of his days. Now the Scripture characterizes saints and sinners, upon the ground of their habitual feelings and conduct; and, therefore, saints do not forfeit their character by their moral imperfection, though it consists in feeling and acting sometimes like sinners. It is probable, the divine constitution does not admit of any long interval

It has been observed, in this discourse, that sin and holiness are diametrically opposite affections, and cannot be united in one and the same volition. And it has been further observed, that the Scripture represents them as totally distinct exercises of heart. These considerations afford a much stronger proof, that all holy affections are distinct from all unholy ones, than the mere want of consciousness of this distinction affords to the contrary. We all know, that our *thoughts* are extremely rapid in their succession. We cannot ascertain how many thoughts we have in one hour, nor even in one minute. And our *affections* or *volitions* may be as rapid in their succession as our *thoughts*; yea, it is very evident, that they are too rapid for observation. For, though we never act without a motive; yet we often act without being able, the next moment after action, to tell the motive from which we acted. This shows, that the succession in our *volitions* as well as in our *thoughts* is sometimes too rapid to be distinctly remarked. Let it be admitted, therefore, that saints are not always conscious of the alternate succession of holy and unholy exercises in their own minds, this will not prove, that there is no such succession. The plain reason is, the succession is too rapid to be observed. If any are disposed to doubt of the force of this answer, let them try to distinguish the succession of their own thoughts and volitions, and it is presumed, they will be convinced of its being utterly impracticable. Of course, they will be obliged to renounce the objection, arising from experience, against the alternate succession of virtuous and sinful exercises, in the minds of true believers.

It may be said, that according to the tenor of this discourse, saints may be sometimes *entirely* holy, and sometimes *entirely* sinful. But this is extremely ab-

a train of low and languishing affections. The truth is, the final salvation of all true believers depends upon God's working in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure; and therefore their salvation is absolutely certain, whether he *constantly* produces holy affections in their hearts, or whether he *sometimes withdraws* his gracious influences from them. It is sufficient for them to be assured, that "He who has begun a good work in them will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

But it may be still further said, that all true believers have a *principle of grace*, which was implanted in regeneration, and which will not admit of their being *totally destitute* of holiness, for a single moment.

In answer to this objection, it seems necessary to examine the principal passages of Scripture, upon which it is founded. These are such as the following: "A *new heart* also will I give you, and a *new spirit* will I put within you: and I will take away the *stony heart* out of your flesh, and I will give you an *heart of flesh*. That which is born of the Spirit is *spirit*. Whosoever is born of God *doth not* commit sin; *for his seed* remaineth in him: and he *cannot sin*, because he is born of God. If any man be in Christ he is a *new creature*: old things are *passed away*; behold, *all things are become new*. A good man out of the *good treasure of the heart* bringeth forth *good things*."

Here it is natural to remark, in the first place, that these texts cannot mean, that a *principle* of holiness is implanted in the mind in regeneration. For holiness is love, and love requires no other principles, than those of moral agency, which are common to all moral agents. A sinner has no need of a *new natural principle*, in order to exercise holy affections; nor is any such principle required. All that the divine law requires of any man is the exercise of true love, or uni-

versal benevolence. This has been shown in a former discourse.\* If these texts, therefore, do not prove, that saints have a *gracious principle*, then they do not prove, that they are *always* in the actual possession and exercise of grace.

The next remark is, that the passages under consideration prove too much, and of consequence, prove nothing to the purpose, for which they are brought. They prove, if taken literally, that when the heart of flesh is given, the heart of stone is totally and finally removed; that when a man is born of the Spirit, *all* his moral exercises become spiritual or truly holy; that when a man is made a new creature, *all* his old sinful exercises are done away, and all his moral affections become *new*; that when the treasure of the heart is made good, nothing but pure holiness or moral goodness can proceed from it. In a word, they prove, that when once the good seed is sown in the heart, it *remains* and produces nothing but *good fruit*. But how is all this consistent with the truth, which has been established in this discourse, and which is granted by all who plead for a *principle* of grace, that saints are in a state of imperfection and have the remains of moral corruption? We must, therefore, look for some different interpretation of these figurative expressions of Scripture.

This leads us to observe in the last place, that these texts, in their true meaning, support the very sentiment, which they are supposed to refute. They plainly intimate, that regeneration is the production of real holiness, which is totally distinct from sin, and can never be united or blended with it. For, if the giving of the heart of flesh be the taking away of the heart of stone, then the heart of stone and the heart of flesh are

\* Page 308.



totally distinct; if that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, then flesh and spirit are totally distinct; if a man's becoming a new creature removes all his old exercises, then his new exercises are totally distinct from his old; or if he that is born of God sinneth not, because his seed remaineth in him, then that seed, which our Saviour calls spirit, is totally distinct from such sinful exercises, as all must allow, more or less prevail in the best of saints. On this supposition, that grace is perfectly pure and entirely distinct from all the sinful exercises, all the Scripture representations of the renovation of the heart may be explained, in consistency with the moral agency and with the moral imperfection of good men. It now appears, we trust, that there is no solid objection against the leading sentiment in this discourse, that all the criminal imperfection of saints consists in positively sinful affections.

## SERMON XIX.

### THE TRUE CHARACTER OF GOOD MEN DELINEATED.

ROMANS vii, 18.

*For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not.*

**HAVING** shown, in the preceding discourse, that it is the desire of saints to be perfect—that notwithstanding this desire they are still imperfect—and that their imperfection consists in positively sinful exercises, it only remains to improve the subject, by drawing a number of inferences from it.

**INFERENCE 1.**—If the imperfection of saints consists in the *inconstancy* of their holy exercises, then it is their duty to become absolutely perfect. It appears from what has been said, that there is nothing to prevent their reaching perfection in this life, but their own free, voluntary, sinful exercises. They would be entirely sinless, if they would only *continue* to exercise just such holy affections as they sometimes do exercise. If they are able to have one good affection, why not another, and another, without intermission? And if they are able to have a constant series of good affections, why are they not under moral obligation to have such a series, and to be uniformly holy? No reason can be given, why they should not be perfect, which will not be as good a reason, why they should voluntarily commit sin. But who can believe, that saints ought to commit the least iniquity? Though no man has been absolutely perfect in this life, and though it is very evident, that no man ever will be so in the

present state; yet this affords not the least excuse for the least moral imperfection. It is the indispensable duty of all saints to keep themselves *always* in the love of God, and to be holy as he is holy, and perfect as he is perfect. They cannot fall short of moral perfection, without exercising positively sinful affections, which must be condemned by the divine law, and by their own enlightened consciences.

INFERENCE 2.—If the present imperfection of saints consists in the *inconstancy* of their holy exercises, then it is easy to conceive how they will all be *equally perfect* in a future state. The Scripture assures us, that all true believers will be perfectly pure, as soon as they are absent from the body and present with the Lord. We read, “There shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven any thing that *defileth*, neither whatsoever worketh *abomination*; or maketh a *lie*.” Those, who have already reached the mansions of the blessed, are called “the spirits of just men *made perfect*.” And the Apostle tells us “When that which is *perfect* is come, then that which is *in part* shall be done away.” But how can all true saints become thus *equally perfect*, the moment they arrive at the kingdom of glory? They will enter into the regions of light with unequal capacities, with unequal knowledge, and with unequal reasons of gratitude and praise. These inequalities must lay a foundation for an inequality of holiness to all eternity. How, then, can they all be *equally perfect*, while they are *unequally holy*? The answer to this is easy, if, their imperfection will *cease*, the moment their sinful exercises *cease*; and, if, their perfection will *commence*, the moment their holy exercises become *constant* and *uninterrupted*. And this will certainly be the case, if their present imperfection wholly consists in the *inconstancy* of their holy

exercises. We must suppose, that all their positively sinful exercises will cease, before they are admitted into the immediate presence of God, and as soon as these cease, their holy affections will of course become *constant*; and that *constancy* of perfectly holy exercises, must constitute sinless perfection. In this way the least saint will be as perfect as the greatest; and the greatest will be as perfect, the first moment he enters the gates of Paradise, as he ever will be, in any period of eternity. Though all the inhabitants of heaven will incessantly make advances in holiness, yet none will make advances in perfection, which essentially and necessarily consists in the *constant* exercise of holy affections.

INFERENCE 3.—If the imperfection of saints be owing, not to the *weakness*, but to the *inconstancy* of their holy exercises; then there is a propriety in their being called *perfect*, notwithstanding they are far from being free from moral corruption. The Scripture both directly and indirectly represents all good men as perfect. We read, “Noah was a just man, and *perfect* in his generations.” It is said of Job, “That man was *perfect* and upright.” We are told, “God will not cast away a *perfect* man, neither will he help the evil doers.” The Psalmist says, “Mark the *perfect* man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.” Solomon observes, “The upright shall dwell in the land; and the *perfect* shall remain in it.” He says again, “The righteousness of the *perfect* shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.” That the word *perfect* is here used in a strict and proper sense, appears from other texts, in which saints are represented as having a *perfect heart*. We read, “Asa’s heart was *perfect* all his days.” Hezekiah pleads the perfection of his own heart before God. “I

beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a *perfect heart*." The Prophet also says, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in behalf of them whose *heart is perfect* towards him."

Now, if all good men have some holy exercises, which are entirely pure and free from sin; there is a strict propriety in calling them *perfect*, notwithstanding all their remaining impurity and imperfection. Their perfectly holy affections render it as proper to call them *perfect* as their totally sinful affections render it proper to call them *imperfect*. Since they have some *entirely right* affections, they may be truly called *blameless, harmless, sincere, undefiled, and pure in heart*. But if their holy affections were always too *low and languid*, or were always *mixed with moral impurity*, then no *moral perfection* could belong to their character. And if this were true, there could be no propriety in calling them *perfect*, or in using any expressions, which convey this idea. But if all their moral exercises are *perfectly holy*, except those which are *totally sinful*, then it is altogether proper, that they should be characterized by their *best* affections, which constitute their moral *beauty* and real *perfection*.

INFERENCE 4.—If the imperfection of saints consists in the *inconstancy* of their holy exercises, then it is easy to account for their *spiritual declensions*. It is no uncommon thing for good men to go backward, instead of going forward in religion. This is generally ascribed to the languor and weakness of their *gracious exercises*, or to the want of strength and vigor in their *gracious principle*. But it is extremely difficult to account for such coldness and barrenness in christians, if *all* their moral exercises are pure and ho-

ly, or if they have always a *principle of grace*, upon which divine objects must *always* make some good impression. It is, therefore, much more reasonable to suppose, that their spiritual declension is owing to the *increase* of positively sinful exercises. For, as these *increase*, gracious exercises must necessarily *decrease*. They cannot love God, while they are loving the world; they cannot serve God while they are serving mammon; and they cannot mind *spiritual*, while they are minding *earthly* things. Spiritual declension ought, in all cases, to be ascribed entirely to the *fewness* of gracious exercises. As natural coldness in winter is not owing to the distance of the sun from the earth, but to the *fewness* and *oblique direction* of its rays which fall upon it; so spiritual coldness, formality, and deadness in religion is not owing to the *languor* of holy exercises, but to the *fewness* and *interruption* of right affections. Saints know by experience, that while their attention is fixed on divine objects and not diverted, and while their holy affections continue uniform and uninterrupted, they find the greatest satisfaction and enjoyment in the duties of devotion. But while they mind earthly things, and eagerly pursue worldly objects and enjoyments, they find their graces languish, and they grow cold and dead to every thing of a spiritual and divine nature. As they generally grow *warm* and *lively* in religion, as fast as their holy exercises *increase*; so they generally grow *cold* and *dull* as fast as their love to God is interrupted by their love to the world. They never stand still, but always go either forward or backward in their religious course. When they go forward, they go forward of choice; and when they go backward, they go backward of choice. Their declension is altogether voluntary, and entirely owing to their positively sinful exercises. It

is true, indeed, spiritual light and comfort do not always keep pace with their growth in grace; nor do spiritual darkness and distress always follow their declension in religion. The reason is, light and darkness, comfort and distress, do not immediately depend upon *their will*, but upon the nature of those *manifestations*, which God is pleased to make to their minds. Though they commonly enjoy more light and comfort, while they are making progress in holiness; yet they sometimes grow in grace very fast, while they are denied the peculiar manifestations of the divine favor. And though they are commonly involved in greater darkness, while they are declining in grace; yet their declension is sometimes attended with more stupidity, than darkness and distress of mind. Hence they ought to measure their growth in grace, by the *increase* of holy affections, and not by the *increase* of spiritual light and comfort. And, on the other hand, they ought to measure their declension in religion, by the *increase* of sinful affections, and not by the *increase* of spiritual darkness and distress. For, however things may appear to themselves, they actually decline more and more in religion, the more and more they live in the exercise of sinful affections.

INFERENCE 5.—If saints, in their present imperfect state, are constantly liable to positively sinful exercises; then they are constantly dependent upon God, to carry on a work of sanctification in their hearts. Their gracious exercises are not necessarily and inseparably connected with each other; and of consequence, may at any time be interrupted by totally sinful affections. They have no permanent source or fountain of holiness within themselves, from which a constant stream of holy affections will naturally and necessarily flow. As one holy affection will not produce another, so

they are immediately dependent upon God for every holy affection. The moment he withdraws his gracious influence, their gracious exercises cease, and sinful exercises instantly succeed. And in this case, they are no more able to *renew* the train of holy affections, than they were to *begin* it at first. Their sanctification, therefore, is precisely the same as continued regeneration. Accordingly the Apostle Paul represents himself and all other christians, as constantly dependent upon a divine influence for the continuation and growth of grace. He says, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." He says, "Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." He says, "After ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." He says, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." He says, "As many as are *led* by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." But though God has promised to give saints the influences of his Spirit to produce holy affections in their hearts, and prepare them for future and eternal blessedness; yet he has not promised, that such divine influences shall be *constant*, but has reserved the power of withdrawing them, whenever he pleases. This shows, that christians are constantly and immediately dependent upon God, to keep up a train of holy exercises in their hearts; and when it is broken by the intervention of sinful affections, to renew it again. The preparation of their heart, as well as the answer of their tongue, is from the Lord. It depends upon God, who has begun a good work in their hearts; to carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ. He only can make them perfect in



every good work to do his will, working in them that which is well pleasing in his sight.

INFERENCE 6.—If saints, in their present state of imperfection, are subjects of both holy and unholy affections; then it is evident, there is a foundation in their minds for what is commonly called *the christian warfare*. This is peculiar to all real christians. It never takes place in the unregenerate, but always takes place in those who are born again. It is a warfare, not between the heart and conscience, but between holy and unholy affections. Sinners often feel a conflict between the motions of the heart and the dictates of conscience. For when their conscience is awake, it always condemns all their sinful desires and pursuits. There is, however, no real virtue in such a conflict between the selfish desires of the heart and the remonstrances of conscience, though it rise ever so high, or continue ever so long. But the christian warfare always implies something truly holy and acceptable to God. Hence the Apostle speaks of it as an evidence of his having some right desires and affections of heart. “For *to will* is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not.”

Now, if saints have some perfectly holy and some totally sinful exercises, then it is easy to discover the ground of the christian warfare. For sin and holiness are diametrically opposite in their nature, and perfectly hate and oppose each other. While saints are in the exercise of holiness, they hate all sinful affections with a perfect hatred. So long, therefore, as two such opposite kinds of affection alternately exist in their minds, they must be subject to a most sensible and painful conflict. But did their imperfection consist in the mere *languor* of their holy affections, or in their holy affections being *partly unholy*, without any dis-

inct and opposite sinful exercises, there could be no ground for a spiritual warfare. Though their holy affections were too *weak* and *languid*, yet this could afford no ground for their *opposing* each other. And though each holy affection were partly *sinful*, yet this could afford no ground for the same affection to oppose itself. But if the leading sentiment in this discourse be true, that saints have some *perfectly holy* and some *totally sinful* affections; then there appears to be a sufficient ground for a spiritual conflict in their hearts, as long as they remain imperfectly sanctified.

Hence the Apostle Paul, who treats more largely upon the christian warfare than any other inspired Writer, represents it as a mutual opposition between holy and unholy affections. He spends a great part of the chapter which contains the text, in describing the spiritual conflict, which he had felt in his own breast. The description follows: "For we know that the law is spiritual," it requires nothing but holy and spiritual affections, "but I am *carnal, sold unto sin*. For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good." So far as I am in the exercise of grace, I always see and approve the goodness of the law. "Now then, it is no more I that do it, but *sin* that dwelleth in me." Whenever I do any thing which is sinful, I act contrary to those holy affections, which form my christian character. "For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." I know that when the train of holy exercises is interrupted, then my affections are altogether sinful. "For *to will* is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not." While the train of holy exercises continues, I desire, I resolve, I determine to do noth-

ing but what is right. But I often find this train of holy exercises is broken, and then I feel averse from those duties, which I sincerely intended to perform. "For the good that *I would, I do not*; but the evil which *I would not, that do I*. Now if I do that *I would not*, it is no more *I* that do it, but *sin* that dwelleth in me." If I always do right, while *grace is in exercise*, then when I do wrong, it must be wholly ascribed to my *totally sinful feelings*, which, in my happy moments, I always *abhor and resist*. "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me." Though I resolve to do good, in some future period, yet when that period arrives, evil is present with me, and I neglect that which I had previously intended to do. "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man." Is it my habitual\*, disposition to approve and love every divine precept. "But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" My sinful affections I call the law of sin, and my holy affections I call the law of my mind. These two opposite kinds of affection are at variance with each other, and when my sinful affections prevail, I feel myself a captive, in bondage under sin. I know I am acting against the law of my mind, my inward man, my former desires and resolutions; but I find by painful experience, that none but God can break the voluntary cords of mine iniquity, and deliver me from the love and dominion of those sins, which easily beset me. O wretched man

\* Since *habit* always refers to some mental or bodily exercises, and not to *principles* of action, there is a propriety in calling a train of gracious exercises *habitual*, whether they originate from a *principle* of grace, or not.

that I am, to be always exposed to the power and guilt of moral corruptions! Such a conflict between nature and grace the Apostle experienced in his own breast; and such a conflict he represents as common to all christians; for he says to believers in general, "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

If this be a just description of the mutual opposition between perfectly holy and totally sinful affections in the hearts of saints, then it may properly be called a *warfare*. For it obliges them to be always on their guard, and to keep their hearts with all diligence, in order to repel the assaults and intrusion of sinful motions and affections. While they are in the exercise of grace, they habitually dread the approaching enemy, and watch his appearances, lest they should be taken by surprise. Such watching and guarding is essential to the christian warfare, in which victory consists in keeping the ground. As soon as sinful affections take place in the hearts of christians, they are actually conquered. Indeed, that train of affections, whether good or bad, which exists in their hearts, is the conqueror for the time being. If good and bad affections could both exist in the mind at the same instant, and oppose each other ever so powerfully, it does not appear, that either could ever gain the ascendancy. But if sin and holiness cannot exist at the same instant in the same mind, then either the one or the other must gain the victory, by taking possession of the ground. The only way, therefore, in which believers can keep out of spiritual bondage, is to keep themselves in the love of God. But since they are dependent upon a divine influence to do this; and since

that influence may be withdrawn, they are always in danger of being surprized into sin. This renders the christian warfare extremely painful and extremely dangerous. Saints are soldiers for life, and nothing but death can discharge them from their spiritual warfare.

**INFERENCE 7.**—If the imperfection of true believers be owing to the *inconstancy* of their gracious emotions; then they are able to attain a *full assurance* of their good estate, notwithstanding all their remaining corruptions. They are required to make their calling and election sure. It is their duty to know the true state of their minds. They ought to be thankful to God for his special grace, and perform all the peculiar duties, which he has enjoined upon his children. But many seem to think it is out of their power to attain assurance, and plead the deceitfulness and corruption of their hearts, as an excuse for not knowing whether they are really the friends or enemies of God. And did moral imperfection consist in the mere *weakness* of holy affections, or in their being mixed with moral impurity, it seems as though *weak christians*, at least, could not determine their own true character. For, there is no rule in the word of God, by which they can ascertain the point, whether their holy exercises are sufficiently *strong* and *vigorous*, to denominate them real saints. But if moral imperfection consists in the *inconstancy* of perfectly holy affections, then they may certainly determine, that they are the subjects of special grace. For, every holy affection they have, is totally distinct from every sinful affection, and affords an infallible evidence of a renovation of heart. Whoever has true love, or true repentance, or true faith, or true submission, is born again, and has the witness within himself, that he is a true child of God. Though these affections may be interrupted by contra-

ry exercises, yet they still remain an infallible evidence of a saving change. And, as this evidence exists in every real saint, so every real saint may discover it. For, since perfectly holy exercises are entirely distinct from perfectly sinful exercises, and since these two kinds of affection are diametrically opposite in their nature; the conscience is able to distinguish the *least holy affection* from *any sinful exercise*. Hence the weakest christian may discover that infallible evidence of grace, which actually exists in his own heart, and which may give him assurance of his gracious state. Though he may feel and lament great moral corruption, and though his sinful exercises may very often interrupt his holy affections; yet still he may discover that train of holy exercises, which is an infallible evidence of a renovation of heart.

This is the way in which good men in all ages have attained assurance. Paul spake the language of assurance, when he sincerely declared, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." This was as much as to say, though I often fall short of my duty, though I am often in bondage, sold under sin, and though I am prone to break my best resolutions; yet I know, that I sometimes love the law of God, and that I sometimes heartily delight to do his will. And these exercises afford me full assurance, that I am a true penitent and sound believer. Peter offended grievously, and discovered great corruption of heart; but yet when the train of holy exercises was renewed he could appeal to Christ and say, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Job was fully assured of his good estate, while his friends accused him of hypocrisy. He knew that he loved God for what he was in himself, because he could heartily bless him for his frowns as well as for his smiles. Nor

did his cursing the day of his birth destroy his assurance; for this could not invalidate the evidence in his favor, arising from the perfectly holy affections, which he had often been conscious of feeling and expressing.

If we now look into the New Testament, we shall there find, that the primitive christians attained to full assurance, by a consciousness of having pure and holy affections. The Apostle John dwells largely upon this subject in his first Epistle. In the third chapter he says, "*Hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*" Again he says, "*We know that we have passed from death unto life; because we love the brethren.*" He goes on and says, "*My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the spirit which he hath given us.*" He pursues the subject further and asserts, "*If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his spirit. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.*" To give an emphasis to these declarations, the Apostle expressly says, that he wrote this Epistle on purpose to teach christians how to attain assurance of their title to heaven. "*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.*"

Thus it appears, that it is the *reality* of holy affections, and not the *constancy* of them, which affords true believers an infallible evidence of their being born of God. Whenever they discover truly benevolent

exercises, they discover certain evidence of a change of heart. For holiness in every degree of it is the fruit of the Spirit. And this evidence cannot be invalidated by moral imperfection, because it is agreeable to the character of saints in this life, that they should have the remains of moral corruption, or that their holy exercises should be sometimes interrupted by positively sinful affections. Though a single, solitary holy exercise might be more easily overlooked, yet a *succession* of holy exercises may be readily and clearly discerned. Hence a *succession* of holy exercises, which always take place in every regenerate person, may afford every real saint full assurance of his good estate. Let all professors of religion, and especially those that are in doubt of their sincerity, follow the Apostle's direction. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; *prove your own selves*, how that Christ is in you," that is, his spirit, "except ye be reprobates."

INFERENCE 8.—Since the imperfection of saints consists in the *inconstancy* of their holy affections, they need to be much in prayer for divine influence and assistance. They find that their hearts are extremely deceitful and prone to go astray. They find, that all the objects around them are apt to divert their attention and their affections from heavenly and divine things. They find, that after they have had the nearest approaches to God, and the *most* intimate communion with him, their hearts are bent upon back-sliding, and ready to pursue every object of vanity. They are weak, dependent, inconstant, inconsistent creatures. They *perpetually* need divine influence, to keep their hearts, to maintain uniformity of affections, and to give them that peace of mind, which the world cannot give. In this view, Seneca, a heathen philos-



opher, was very sensible of the importance of prayer. "Ask, says he, at the hand of God a *good mind*: and first of all pray unto him *for the health of thy spirit*; and next for the health of thy body." When the blood is either accelerated or retarded in its motion, or when the bones are either broken or dislocated, the body is unfitted for every duty and enjoyment. But a disordered mind is much more intolerable, than a disordered body. A man may sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear? When the affections are interrupted, and thrown into tumult and convulsions, saints are unfitted for thinking, reading, praying, or the performing of any other duty. They are exposed to every temptation from within and from without. They can enjoy no peace nor satisfaction, until their affections are rectified, and their souls return unto God, their only proper rest. Their moral imperfection, therefore, arising from the inconstancy of their holy exercises, perpetually calls upon them to call upon God, for either preventing, or preserving, or restoring mercy. It was a realizing sense of the inconstancy and deceitfulness of their own hearts, which led the ancient saints to give themselves unto prayer for divine instruction, guidance, and influence. This appears from the *peculiar modes of expression*, which they used in their addresses to God. David prays in a strain very singular and striking. "Who can understand *his errors*? cleanse thou me from secret faults. *Keep back* thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have *dominion* over me; then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the *meditation* of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer. *Create* in me a clean heart, O God; and *renew* a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from thy presence; and *take not* thy Holy Spirit from me. *Restore* unto me the joy of thy salvation; and *uphold me* with thy free spirit. *Incline my heart* unto thy testimonies, and *not unto covetousness*. *Turn away* mine eyes from beholding vanity. *Order my steps* in thy word: and *let not iniquity have dominion over me*. *Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works* with men that work iniquity." In most of these places, David is to be considered as speaking the general language of the Old Testament church; which language is exactly agreeable to that daily petition, which Christ taught his disciples. "*Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*" Though an hypocrite will not *always* call upon God; yet every sincere christian; who realizes the inconstancy and deceitfulness of his own heart, will feel the propriety and necessity of complying with that divine precept, "*pray without ceasing.*"

INFERENCE 9.—If the imperfection of saints consists in the *inconstancy* of their holy exercises; then they are, notwithstanding their imperfection, *essentially different* from sinners. The present imperfection of saints has led some very ingenious men to imagine, that the *comparative* difference between saints and sinners is extremely small; and that they will not be treated so very differently in a future state, as is generally supposed. This is the opinion of Mr. Paley, a very ingenious and perspicuous writer. He cannot admit, that the lowest saint will be perfectly blessed, while the best sinner will be perfectly miserable, in a future state. He has conjectured, therefore, that there will be but very little difference between the future and eternal *condition* of the lowest saint, and that of the most moral and amiable sinner. But if the imperfection of saints in

this life entirely consists in the *inconstancy* of their holy exercises; then their moral character is *essentially* different from the moral character of sinners. They have *some perfectly holy and benevolent affections*, of which all sinners are *totally destitute*. They need nothing but constancy in their gracious exercises, in order to render them as perfect as Gabriel, or even as their Father who is in heaven. There is, therefore, not merely a *gradual*, but an *essential* difference between the saint, who has but one spark of saving grace, and the best sinner on earth, who has nothing but selfish and sinful affections. Upon this ground, the inspired Writers distinguish *gracious* and *graceless* persons, by the most opposite appellations; such as the *godly* and *ungodly*, the *holy* and *unholy*, the *righteous* and *unrighteous*, the *friends* and the *enemies* of God. But Christ sets the *essential difference* between saints and sinners in the most plain and intelligible light. He brings the matter to a point, and decides it in the most unequivocal terms. For he absolutely declares, "He that is not *with* me is *against* me; and he that *gathereth not with* me, *scattereth* abroad." And again, "He that is not *against* us is *on our part*. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, Verily I say unto you, *he shall not lose his reward*." This decision of the supreme and final Judge, puts it beyond doubt that there is an *essential difference* between every saint and every sinner; and that every saint will be finally and eternally *rewarded*, while every finally impenitent sinner will be finally and eternally *punished*.

INFERENCE 10.—Since all saints are imperfect in this life, the world ought not to scruple their *sincerity*, on account of their *inconstancy*. Many are ready to call in question the sincerity of saints, because they are

not constant and uniform in fulfilling their own engagements, and in obeying the divine commands. But if they are imperfect, it is to be expected, that they will manifest the inconstancy of their right affections, and discover some wrong feelings towards God, and their fellow men. This has always been the case, with respect to the best saints, whose characters are recorded in Scripture. They were not constant and uniform in their obedience to God, but sometimes felt and acted like sinners. The same thing is still to be expected of those, who are now the *real*, but *inconstant* friends of God. Though they are inconstant, yet they are sincere; though they have some perfectly wrong, yet they have some perfectly right affections. They really love and obey God, though they fall far short of that perfection in holiness, which they ought to have *now*, and which they will most certainly attain *hereafter*. It is, therefore, no less unreasonable, than dangerous, for sinners "to eat up the sins of God's people," and build their hopes, as well as form their excuses upon the criminal defects and imperfections of the excellent of the earth.

INFERENCE 11.—Since all saints are imperfect in the present state, they have abundant reason for humiliation and self-abasement. They have been extremely inconstant, inconsistent, and criminal in their views and feelings. Though they have had some right affections and sincere desires to glorify God; yet they have been as unstable as water, in their good purposes, resolutions and designs. Their imperfections have attended them every day and every where, in all their secular employments, and religious duties. How many worldly affections have crept into their hearts, while they have been necessarily engaged in worldly concerns? How much have they been conformed to the

manners and spirit of the world, while they have been called to mix and converse with the men of the world? How often have their remaining corruptions disturbed their thoughts and affections, in the devotions of the closet, of the family, and of the house of God? Could the contrariety and inconsistency of their feelings and conduct be painted to their own view, as they have actually appeared to the Searcher of hearts, they would blush and be ashamed not only of their hours of labor and amusement, but of their most solemn seasons of retirement, meditation, and prayer. Their sins are not only great and numerous, but exceedingly aggravated. They have broken the most sacred and solemn obligations, and greatly injured those whom they ought to have treated with a peculiar affection and regard. Such criminal imperfections call for deep humiliation and self-abasement. They ought to loath and abhor themselves, when they reflect how much they have offended God, how much they have wounded Christ in the house of his friends, how much they have resisted and grieved the Holy Spirit, how much they have weakened the hands and discouraged the hearts of their fellow-christians, and how much they have robbed themselves of the most solid peace and self-enjoyment. They ought to walk humbly and softly before God every day. They ought to keep their hearts with all diligence, and guard against the assaults of Satan and the snares of the world. They ought to grow in grace, and forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, to press toward the mark of sinless perfection.

## SERMON XX.

THE PROPER DESIGN AND ENERGY OF PRAYER.

GENESIS xxxii, 28.

*For as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.*

**THOUGH** all christians agree in maintaining the duty of prayer; yet many find a difficulty in reconciling this duty with the divine character. They suppose God is perfectly good, infinitely wise, and absolutely immutable in all his purposes; and upon this ground, they cannot easily conceive what influence prayer can have, either to procure his favors, or to avert his frowns. It is the design of the ensuing discourse, therefore, to remove this difficulty, by pointing out the nature and tendency of prayer. And the words I have read, taken in their proper connexion, directly lead us to the consideration of this serious and practical subject.

As Jacob was returning from Padan-Aram to his native country, he sent messengers to his brother Esau, to acquaint him with his intended visit, and to conciliate his favor. But the messengers brought back information, that his brother was on his way to meet him, with four hundred men. This news was extremely alarming to Jacob, who knew his brother's resentment, and his own weakness. In this critical situation, he acted the part of a pious and prudent man. He first attempted to appease his brother's wrath, by a noble and princely present. But lest this precaution should fail of success, he ordered his servants to conduct his family and flocks over the brook Jab-

bok, whilst he himself remained alone, to supplicate the divine favor and protection. At this season of solitude and devotion, he wrestled with God and prevailed. The account is extremely solemn and instructive. "And Jacob was left alone: and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh: and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, *Let me go, for the day breaketh: and he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* And he said unto him, *What is thy name?* and he said, *Jacob.* And he said, *Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.* And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: *for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.*" Here it is very evident, that Jacob wrestled with a Divine Person: and that his wrestling principally or wholly consisted, in pleading and crying for mercy. So we find it represented by the prophet Hosea. "Yea, he had *power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him.*" The sincerity, fervency, and importunity of his prayers, *moved* God to hear and answer his requests. Both the letter and spirit of the text suggest this general observation:

That it is the design of prayer to *move* God to bestow mercy.

This will appear, if we consider,

1. That prayer properly and essentially consists in *pleading*. Though it may be divided into distinct parts or branches; yet all these ultimately unite and centre in supplication. In adoration, confession, petition, and thanksgiving, we ultimately plead for divine mercy. When we petition our fellow men, we

always mean to move them to grant our requests. And in order to prevail, it is common to make use of various modes of supplication or pleading. This is the method, which a penitent child would take, to obtain the forfeited favor of his father. He would acknowledge the rectitude of his father's government; he would confess the injury he had done to his father's character; he would thank him for his past favors; and pathetically plead for his forgiving love. He would naturally employ all these modes of address, in order to *move* his father to pardon his faults. So when we praise God for his perfections, thank him for his mercies, confess our trespasses against him, and present our petitions to him, we do all this with an ultimate aim to move his heart, and obtain the blessings we implore. Indeed, we never supplicate any being without an ultimate intention of prevailing upon him, to do or grant what we desire. And any address, which does not express or imply a design of moving the person addressed, cannot deserve the name of petition or prayer. So far, therefore, as prayer signifies "the offering up of our desires to God for things agreeable to his will," just so far it necessarily implies our design and desire of moving God to bestow the favors we request. There are no two words in our language more nearly synonymous, than praying and pleading. And since praying always implies pleading, it must necessarily imply a desire and design of moving God to shew mercy.

2. It appears from the prayers of good men, which are recorded in Scripture, that they meant to move God to grant their petitions. Abraham's intercession for Sodom carries this idea. He earnestly desired and prayed, that God would graciously spare that degenerate city. And he was so fervent and importu-



nate in his addresses to the Deity, that he apologized for his importunity. "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak." And he continued to apologize, until he made his last and smallest request. "Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but this once." Such great importunity in prayer plainly supposes, that Abraham meant to move the Supreme Being to spare those guilty creatures, for whom he intreated. Jacob wrestled all night with God in prayer, and humbly, though confidently, said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." We must conclude from this, that he meant to move God to grant him a blessing. Job had the same design in praying to God. 'Oh! said he, that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my speech before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.'" And what a variety of arguments did Daniel use, to prevail upon God to grant pardon and deliverance to his covenant people? He prayed in this fervent and importunate strain: "Now, therefore, O my God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake: O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken, and do; defer not, for thy name sake, O my God; for thy city and thy people are called by thy name." Why should Daniel use so many arguments with God; and plead with so much fervor and importunity, unless he desired and intended to move his compassion towards his people, and incline him to work their deliverance? No men ever understood the nature and design of prayer,

better than Abraham, Job, and Daniel. And since these eminent saints evidently meant, by their fervent and importunate supplications, to move God to shew mercy, we may justly conclude this to be a proper end to be proposed in praying. Indeed, it is much to be doubted, whether any good men ever did call upon God with freedom and fervency, without an ardent desire of moving God to grant their requests. This is so essential to prayer, that no pious person, perhaps, would know how to order his speech before God, if this were to be excluded from his petitions. And though some good men may think, that they ought not to indulge a desire of moving God to shew mercy; yet, we believe, if they would examine their own feelings, they would find, that they never have been able to pray in sincerity, without indulging and expressing such a reasonable desire.

3. The friends of God are urged to pray, with fervency and importunity, in order to *move* the divine compassion. This seems to be the spirit of the Prophet's exhortation to the saints in his day. "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence: and *give him no rest* till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." God is pleased to represent himself as greatly influenced, by the prayers of good men. To them he says, "Concerning my sons, and concerning my daughters, *command ye me.*" Again he says, "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be towards this people." And he conveys the same idea in stronger terms still. "Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in the land, they should deliver neither sons nor daughters, but only themselves." These modes of expression clearly and forcibly express the prevailing influence of prayer upon the heart of the Deity. Christ likewise illustrates and in-

culcates the energy of prayer, by the parable of the unjust judge and importunate widow. "And he spake a parable unto this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a certain widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you he will avenge them speedily." The plain and obvious design of this parable is, to represent the powerful influence of pious and persevering prayer, to move God to pity and relieve his friends in distress. And agreeably to this, the Apostle James expressly declares, that, "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man *availeth much*." Indeed, the whole tenor of Scripture encourages saints to call upon God, with desires and hopes of moving his compassion. It is still further to be observed,

4. That the prayers of good men have actually prevailed upon God to grant great and signal favors. When the children of Israel had made a molten image, God was highly displeased, and felt disposed to destroy them. But Moses prayed and his prayers prevailed upon God to spare the idolaters. This appears from the account, which Moses gives of that memorable event. "And the Lord said unto me, Arise, get thee down quickly from hence: for thy people which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt have corrupted themselves: they are quickly turned aside out

of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten image. Furthermore the Lord spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people: *Let me alone*, that I may destroy them from under heaven: and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they. So I turned and came down from the mount—And I fell down before the Lord: as at the first, forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger. For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure wherewith the Lord was wroth against you to destroy you. *But the Lord hearkened unto me at that time also.*” It is here plainly intimated, that the prayers of Moses once and again moved God to bestow great and undeservèd favors. The prayer of Joshua moved God, to stop the course of nature and cause the sun and moon to stand still, while he completed his victory over the enemies of Israel. The prayers of Job moved God to forgive the folly and presumption of his three friends, who had reproached both him and his Maker. David prevailed upon God, by his humble and fervent prayer, to countermand the angel, who stood with a drawn sword over Jerusalem, to destroy it. Samuel often interceded and prevailed with God, to spare and bless his rebellious people. Though Elijah was an imperfectly righteous man, yet his effectual fervent prayers *availed much*, to bring and to remove, divine judgments. The Apostle gives this account of the man, and of his prayers. “Elias was a man of like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth

brought forth her fruit." It was the well known influence of Elijah's prayers, in moving God to smile or frown upon his people, that extorted the significant and pathetic exclamation of Elisha, when he saw him gloriously ascending to heaven. "My Father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." We have another instance of the prevailing influence of prayer, in the conduct of the primitive christians. While Peter was in prison, the church prayed incessantly for him, and at length prevailed. For in answer to their prayers, God miraculously loosed his bands, and set him at liberty. These effects of prayer, in connexion with the other considerations, which have been suggested, afford sufficient evidence, that it is the design of prayer to move God to bestow favors.

But now some may be ready to ask, how can this be? how can prayer have the least influence to move the heart of God, who is of one mind, and with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning?

Here we ought to consider, in the first place, that the prayers of good men are *proper reasons*, why an infinitely wise and good Being should grant their requests. The entreaties and tears of Joseph were *proper reasons*, why his brethren should have spared him from the pit; and they were finally constrained to acknowledge the force of those reasons. "They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us; and we would not hear." The cries of the poor and needy are *proper reasons*, why we should grant them relief. And the ardent desires of a dutiful child are *proper reasons*, why the parent should gratify his feelings. So, the sincere and humble prayers of the upright are *proper reasons* why the great Parent of all should shew them favor.

Hence says the Psalmist, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." When a saint sincerely offers up his desires to God for a certain favor, God views his prayer as a reason, why he should grant his request. And when a number of saints unite in praying for any public blessing, God views their united petitions as so many reasons, why he should grant it. It is true, indeed, God does not always answer the prayers of his friends, because he often sees stronger reasons for denying, than for granting their requests. His perfect benevolence is under the direction of his unerring wisdom, which always leads him to act according to the highest reason. So far, therefore, as the prayers of his people are consistent with the general good, just so far they are always a powerful and prevailing reason, for the bestowing of divine favors.

We ought to consider, in the next place, that though God formed all his purposes from eternity; yet he formed them in the view of all the pious petitions, which should ever be presented to him, and gave them all the weight that they deserved, in fixing his determinations. In determining to forgive the idolatry of Israel, he had respect to the request of Moses. In determining to cause the sun and moon to stand still, he had respect to the petition of Joshua. In determining to release Peter from prison, he had respect to the pressing importunity of the church. Indeed, all his purposes, which relate to the bestowment of *solicited* favors, were formed under the weight and influence of those prayers, which he intended to answer. He adapted preventing, preserving, delivering mercies to the prayers of his people, and fixed a connexion between their prayers, and his special interpositions.

This leads us, in the last place, to consider pious prayers as *the proper means* of bringing about the

events with which they are connected in the divine purpose. Though God is able to work without means, yet he has been pleased to adopt means into his plan of operation. And according to this mode of operation, means are absolutely necessary in order to accomplish the designs of God. As he designed to save Noah and his family, by the instrumentality of the ark; so it was absolutely necessary that the ark should be built. As he designed to deliver Israel by the hand of Moses; so it was absolutely necessary, that Moses should be preserved by the daughter of Pharaoh. And as he designed to save Paul from shipwreck by the exertion of the sailors; so it was absolutely necessary that the sailors should abide in the ship. In the same manner, the prayers of saints are *the necessary means* of procuring those favors, or of bringing about those events, which God has connected with their petitions. This will appear from a single consideration. If prayers did not really operate *as means*, in procuring divine favors; then it would be as proper, to pray for divine blessings after they are granted, as before. But this we all know to be absurd. Suppose a good man hears that his friend at a distance is dangerously sick; it is certainly proper that he should pray for his life. But supposing he is credibly informed, a few weeks after, that his friend is entirely restored to health; it is certainly improper that he should continue to pray for the removal of his sickness. The reason is, while his friend was sick, his prayers might be *the means* of procuring his recovery; but after that event had actually taken place, his prayers could no longer operate *as means* of bringing it to pass. Hence it appears, that the immutability of the divine purposes, instead of destroying, actually establishes the necessity and prevalence of prayer. The more indisso-

lubly God has fixed the connexion between our praying and his hearing, the more we are bound and encouraged to pray. After God had promised his people in Babylon, that he would restore them to their former prosperity, he expressly said, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." But who can imagine, that God's promise to bless his people in answer to prayer, should destroy the propriety or the energy of their prayers for promised blessings?

## IMPROVEMENT.

1. If it be the design of prayer to move God to bestow temporal and spiritual favors; then there is a propriety in praying *for others* as well as *for ourselves*. We find intercession to be much inculcated in the word of God. The Psalmist calls upon saints to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem;" that is, for the general prosperity of the church. Paul represents intercession as the first and principal branch of prayer. "I exhort therefore that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men." And James enjoins the duty of intercession upon every christian. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another." Those, who possess universal benevolence, find a peculiar pleasure in praying for others. And it appears from Scripture, that the most eminent saints have always been the most remarkable intercessors at the throne of divine grace. But were it not the design of prayer to move God to shew mercy, there would be no propriety nor importance in praying for any but ourselves. If, as many pious divines have taught, the only purpose of prayer is to prepare ourselves to receive or to be denied divine favors, then there seems to be no ground or reason to pray for the temporal or spiritual



good of our fellow men. Our prayers can have no tendency to prepare them for either the smiles or frowns of heaven. If we pray for their outward prosperity; this can have no tendency to prepare them for the reception of external blessings. If we pray for their deliverance from outward evils; this can have no tendency to prepare them for the removal of afflictions. If we pray for their right improvement of divine favors or divine judgments; this can have no tendency to inspire their hearts with either gratitude or submission. Indeed, our prayers for others can answer no other purpose, than that of *moving the Deity* to do them good. Take away this design of intercession, and it ceases to have any meaning, and to answer any valuable end. But if, as we have shown, it be the proper design of prayer to move the Deity to bestow favors; then the effectual fervent prayers of the righteous may have a powerful tendency to draw down divine blessings upon others, as well as upon themselves. Upon this ground, intercession appears to be as proper and important, as any other branch of prayer.

2. We are led to conclude, from what has been said upon this subject, that we have as fair an opportunity of obtaining divine favors, as if God were to form his determinations, at the time we present our petitions. Many imagine, that it is a great discouragement to prayer, that God has determined from all eternity, what he will grant and what he will deny to the children of men. But it appears from what has been said, that our prayers may have all the influence now, in procuring divine favors, that they could have, if God were now to form his purposes respecting us. For he actually formed his eternal purposes in the full view of all our prayers, and gave them all the weight they deserved. It is as strictly true, therefore, that our

prayers move him to grant us favors, as if he determined to grant them, at the time of our praying. Hence we have as fair an opportunity of *prevailing* upon the Deity to grant us any particular future blessings, as if we knew he had yet to form his purpose of granting or denying it. This may be easily and clearly illustrated. Suppose two men are condemned to die. Suppose a certain day is set for each of them to plead for pardon before the king. Suppose each criminal has a friend, who unknown to him, goes to the king before the day appointed, and states his case exactly as it is, and offers all the reasons for his being pardoned, that can be offered. And suppose the king, upon hearing the pleas made in favor of each criminal, absolutely determines to pardon one, and to execute the other. Let me now ask, Can these fixed determinations of the king be any disadvantage to the criminals, when they actually make their own pleas before him on the day appointed? Thus God foresaw from eternity all his suppliants, and all their supplications, and gave them all the weight that an infinitely wise and benevolent Being ought to give them. Their prayers, therefore, avail as much as it is possible they should avail, were God to form his determinations, at the time they stand praying before him. But here perhaps, it may be said, there is no occasion of their praying at all, if God foresaw their prayers from eternity and fixed his purposes in connexion with them. The answer to this is easy. When God determines to do any thing one way, he equally determines not to do it another way. When he determines to bring about any event by prayer, he equally determines not to bring about that event without prayer. Thus when he determined to deliver his people from the Babylonish captivity, in answer to the prayers of Daniel, Ezra,

Nehemiah, and other pious Israelites; he equally determined not to deliver them, if he were not inquired of by those good men to do it for them. Indeed, the energy of prayer properly consists in moving God to execute those purposes, which were formed in connexion with prayer. In some cases, God has revealed not only his purposes, but also revealed, that they are to be accomplished in answer to prayer. In all such cases, prayers are as necessary as any other appointed means, of accomplishing the divine purposes. And though in most cases, God has not revealed his purposes, nor whether they are to be accomplished by prayer; yet if some of his *unrevealed* purposes are connected with prayer, the accomplishment of these particular purposes as much depends upon prayer, as upon any other means or second causes. Hence it appears, that every person may do as much to obtain temporal and eternal blessings, by sincere and submissive prayer, as if God had not, from eternity, absolutely determined when, and where, and upon whom, to bestow his favors. Even importunity, ardor, and perseverance in prayer, are as proper and as influential in order to obtain any divine blessing, on supposition of God's immutability, as they could be on supposition of his being now at liberty to alter his past purposes, or to form his determinations anew. And since this is the case, we have all the encouragement to pray for divine favors, that rational, dependent, ill-deserving creatures can reasonably desire, or can possibly enjoy. For God has determined, from eternity, to hear every prayer that ought to be heard.

3. We learn from what has been said, the propriety of praying for *future*, as well as for *present* blessings. If it were the sole design of prayer, to prepare our own hearts for the reception of divine favors, there could

be no propriety in praying for any far distant good to be bestowed upon ourselves or upon others. But if it be the proper design of addressing the throne of divine grace, to move the compassion of God; then we may pray for future mercies with as much propriety as for present relief; and our prayers may be of as much avail to draw down divine favors upon the world, hundreds and thousands of years hence, as at this day. There is great reason to believe, that the prayers of good men, in all ages, have had a mighty influence in moving God to bestow great and extensive blessings upon future generations of mankind. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, no doubt, prayed, that God would put their future posterity into the possession of the land of promise. All the while the Jews were in Babylon, those who were Israelites indeed, no doubt, incessantly prayed for their restoration to their native country, at the period predicted. All good men from Adam to Simeon, undoubtedly prayed for the fulfilment of the first promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. In all these instances, the prayers of holy men were not lost, but had great influence in procuring long desired and far distant blessings. Our Savior taught his disciples to pray for the future enlargement of his kingdom, saying, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." God intends to send the gospel to the ends of the earth, and bring all nations into his kingdom. And we may presume, that the fervent prayers of myriads of pious christians, will avail much to bring about this great and desirable event. If prayer be designed to move God to bestow mercy, then it may be as proper and as important, to pray for the prosperity of the church and the happiness of mankind to the remotest ages, as to pray for any present temporal or spiritual good. As the prayers of our pious

progenitors have procured great and distinguishing favors for us; so our humble and fervent prayers may procure the best of blessings for our distant posterity. Indeed, it is our indispensable duty to pray for the accomplishment of all the purposes and predictions of God, which remain to be accomplished.

4. It appears from what has been said, that saints are in a safe and happy condition. They enjoy the benefit of the prayers of all the people of God. Good men are required to pray for one another, and they live in the daily performance of this duty. They make intercessions and supplications for all the friends of Zion. They continually pray for the enlargement and prosperity of the church; which is virtually praying for the peace, and comfort, and edification of every sincere christian on earth. These prayers of God's people are very efficacious. They have all the influence, which any good man can desire, to draw down the blessings of God upon him. Must it not be a source of peculiar satisfaction to any pious pilgrim and stranger on earth, to reflect, that all God's people are constantly praying for him, while he is passing through this vale of tears? The effectual fervent prayers of the friends of God for one another, ought to comfort, quicken, and animate them, to run with patience and confidence the race that is set before them. They may rely upon it, that they will never be forgotten nor forsaken of God, while so many memorials in their favor are daily presented to the throne of divine grace.

5. This subject may remind sinners of what they have to fear from the prayers of saints. Their united supplications for the honor of God, the accomplishment of his designs, and the overthrow of all his incorrigible enemies, forebode terrible and eternal evils to impenitent sinners. The prayers of Noah proved fatal to the old world. The prayers of Lot proved fatal to

Sodom. The prayers of Moses proved fatal to the Egyptians and the Amalekites. The prayers of Joshua proved fatal to the inhabitants of Canaan. The prayers of Elijah proved the ruin of Ahab. The prayers of David destroyed Ahitophel. And the Apostle John represents the prayers of saints as one procuring cause of the wasting judgments, which God has sent, and is still sending upon the Antichristian world, by the ministers of his vengeance. "I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came, and stood at the altar having a golden censer: and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it *with the prayers of the saints* upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, *which came with the prayers of the saints*, ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound." This is a lively representation of the power of prayer, to enkindle the wrath of God against the enemies of his church. The wicked, therefore, have abundant reason to tremble at the powerful intercession of the people of God against them. In their present state they have nothing to expect, but that the prayers of saints will prove their final ruin. They certainly will, unless they repent and believe the gospel.

6. Since prayer has such a prevailing influence upon the heart of the Deity, saints have great encouragement to abound in this duty. They are formed for this devout and holy exercise. Having become the children of God, they possess the spirit of adoption, which is the spirit of grace, and supplication. It was

said of Saul of Tarsus, as soon as he was converted, "behold! he prayeth." Prayer is the proper business of good men, who have the greatest encouragement to call upon God, without ceasing. Jacob wrestled with God and prevailed. And God has never said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye me in vain." Their prayers are always heard and accepted, even though the things they pray for be not immediately, nor eventually granted. But besides this, there are many other motives, which ought to prevail upon all good men to abound in the duty of prayer.

Let them consider, in the first place, that this duty is very generally neglected. Though all men ought to pray, and not to faint; yet how many cast off fear and restrain prayer before God? How many rise up and lie down, go out and come in, without acknowledging God in any of their ways? How many are so averse from prayer, that nothing but some threatening danger, or pressing calamity, can bring them to the throne of divine grace? How many prayerless families, and prayerless persons, are to be found in every place? This melancholy reflection ought to animate the few friends of God in the world, to cry mightily for themselves, and for thoughtless, guilty, perishing sinners.

Let them consider, in the next place, the peculiar pleasure to be found in devotion. When do saints enjoy more of heaven upon earth, than while they are drawing near to God, and unbosoming themselves to their heavenly Father? What divine satisfaction did Job, David, Daniel, and other devout men enjoy, while they were fervently praying for the peace and prosperity of Zion? Prayer naturally fixes the attention upon the character, the conduct, and the designs of the Deity, and upon all those great and amiable objects which are suited to gratify every holy and devout affection. Jacob never enjoyed a happier season,

than while his whole soul was vigorously wrestling with God in prayer. God is ever ready to reward those, who call upon him in sincerity, with the peculiar manifestations of his love. And this is certainly an animating motive to pray without ceasing and without fainting.

Let them consider, in the third place, that humble, fervent, constant prayer will give them life and spirit in the performance of all other duties. They will meditate, they will read the word of God, they will hear the gospel preached, they will attend divine ordinances, they will pursue their secular concerns, and converse with their fellow men, very much in the same manner, in which they call upon God. If they maintain a daily intercourse with the Deity, and sincerely implore his gracious presence and assistance, they will find themselves ready to every good work, and exhibit an amiable example of virtue and piety to all around them. They will most certainly live as they pray.

In the last place, let them seriously consider that constancy, sincerity, and fervency in prayer, will be the best means to prepare them for dying. It is the natural tendency of this duty to inspire the mind with clear and realizing views of invisible and divine objects. It is principally by prayer, that saints familiarize the scenes, which lie beyond the grave, and prepare for an easy and joyful transition out of time into eternity. Hence we find the ancient patriarchs spent their last moments in prayer. The last words of David were employed in thanksgiving and praise. Stephen died calling upon God. And the great Redeemer expired in the act of praying. Those, who live prayerfully, are prepared to die prayerfully. And who would not wish to leave this world, and appear before God, in a praying frame?



## SERMON XXI.

ON THE JUSTIFICATION OF BELIEVERS.

ROMANS v, 1.

*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

THE apostle having, in the preceding chapters, established the doctrine of justification by faith alone through the atonement of Christ, proceeds to draw a just and important inference from it in the text.—“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Justification places all, who cordially believe in Christ, in a new, a safe, and a happy situation. There is, however, no small difficulty in reconciling this, with some other equally plain and important truths of the gospel. But all this difficulty, perhaps, may be entirely removed, by exhibiting the doctrine of justification in a just and scriptural light. In attempting to do this, it is proposed,

- I. To describe true believers.
- II. To consider what is meant by their being justified.
- III. To consider how they are justified.
- IV. To consider when they are justified.
- V. To consider the terms upon which they are justified.

I. I am to describe true believers. These are persons, who have been brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace. All men are by nature morally depraved, and entirely destitute of the least degree of true love to God. They are completely under the

dominion of a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. They deserve nothing better from the hand of God whom they have hated and disobeyed, than eternal death, the proper wages of sin. Now, all true believers have been awakened to see themselves in this guilty and perishing condition, and brought to accept the punishment of their iniquities, and to ascribe righteousness to God, should he see fit to cast them off forever. They have been made willing to renounce all self-dependence and self-righteousness, and to rely alone upon the atonement of Christ for pardoning mercy in the sight of God. They have believed the record which God has given of his Son, and fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them in the gospel. Christ has appeared to them precious, and their hearts have been united to him, as the branches are united to the vine. This has been owing to a divine operation upon their hearts. The apostle John represents those who have believed in the name of Christ, as "being born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in the hearts of all true believers, to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ." None ever become true believers, until they have been renewed in the spirit of their mind, and have put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. But though God has begun a good work in their hearts, yet he carries it on gradually, and never makes them perfectly holy in this life. Paul acknowledged that he had not attained to perfect holiness, but when he would do good evil was present with him. His moral imperfections deeply affected him, and caused him to

cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Though true believers have been reconciled to God, and God has been reconciled to them; yet they offend him every day, and every day deserve the marks of his holy displeasure.

II. We are next to consider what is meant by their justification. The apostle asserts, that "being justified by faith, they have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Justification is a term taken from the practice of civil courts, in acquitting or releasing from punishment those, who are found innocent of the charges alleged against them. But this term is not to be understood precisely in the same sense, when applied to the justification of believers. Though God releases them from *punishment*, yet he does not declare them *innocent*. He views them as actually *guilty* of transgressing his holy law, and as deserving to suffer the full penalty of it; but nevertheless for Christ's sake, he releases them from suffering the just punishment of their iniquities. So that justification, in a gospel sense, signifies no more nor less, than the *pardon* or *remission* of sin. What is called *justification*, in the New Testament, is more commonly called *forgiveness* in the Old. Under the Law, God is said to *forgive* or *pardon* true penitents; but under the Gospel, he is said either to *forgive*, or to *justify* them, which signifies the same thing. Christ usually told those who repented and believed, that "their sins were *forgiven*." Peter said to the three thousand that were awakened on the day of Pentecost, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the *remission* of sins." Paul commonly used justification and forgiveness as synonymous terms. Speaking of believers in the third of

Romans, he says, "Being *justified* freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the *remission* of sins." And he addressed the Jews at Antioch in similar terms. "Be it known to you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the *forgiveness of sins*: And by him all that believe are *justified* from all things from which ye could not be *justified* by the law of Moses." These and many other passages of Scripture plainly teach us, that the *justification* of believers is the same thing as their *forgiveness*, through the atonement of Christ.

III. We are to consider how God justifies, pardons, or forgives true believers.

The assembly of Divines say, "Justification is an *act* of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, &c." But have we any evidence, that he *does*, or *says* any thing, when he justifies or pardons believers? Do they see any thing *done*, or hear any thing *said* when they are justified? Or is there any reason to suppose, that God puts forth any *act* or makes any *declaration*, at the time of their justification? But if he does neither of these things, we have still to inquire *how* or in *what manner*, he justifies believers. To this question a plain and satisfactory answer may be given. God justifies all true believers by WILL. He has formed, and written, and published his last Will and Testament concerning mankind; in which he pardons all true believers, and makes them heirs of salvation, but totally disinherits and banishes from his kingdom all the finally impenitent and unbelieving. As it is by Will, that parents give future legacies to their children, while they are young, and even before they are born; so it is by Will, that God

gives future legacies to his children. Hence says the Apostle, "The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God: and if *children*, then *heirs* of God, and *joint heirs* with Christ." There is no occasion of God's *saying* or *doing* any thing, at the time of justifying believers, because he has already adopted them into his family and made them heirs, according to the terms specified in his written and revealed *Will*.

IV. Let us next consider when true believers are justified, pardoned, and accepted. The apostle plainly intimates, that they are justified as soon as they become believers. "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Our Savior said, "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life." And again he solemnly declared, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall *not* come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." The apostle declares, "There is *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." And he more directly says to believers, "You, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, *hath* he quickened together with him, having *forgiven* all your trespasses, blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that were against us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." He furthermore asserts, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also *justified*; and whom he *justified*, them he also *glorified*." It

appears from these passages of Scripture, that as soon as any persons arise from spiritual death to spiritual life; or as soon as they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; or, in a word, as soon as they exercise any gracious affection, they become the children of God; and as soon as they become the children of God, they become heirs; and are instantly justified, pardoned, and accepted, whether they know it, or not. Children may be heirs to great estates, while they are entirely ignorant of their heirship. And so the children of God may be heirs to a rich and eternal inheritance, while they have painful fears of being forever disinherited. Justification is instantaneous; and takes place that moment, in which sinners become saints, or have the character of heirs in God's revealed Will.

It now remains,

V. To consider the conditions upon which believers are completely justified, pardoned, and accepted. I use all these expressions, because they are all used in Scripture to signify the same thing. Though believers are justified, pardoned, and accepted, as soon as they believe, or become the children of God; yet if we look into his last Will and Testament, we find that their *full* and *final* pardon entitled to their eternal inheritance is *conditional*. They must perform certain things, which he has specified as terms or conditions of their taking possession of their several legacies. When a man makes a Will, he may bequeath certain legacies to his children upon certain terms or provisos. He may give a legacy to one child upon condition, that he lives to become of age; to another upon condition, that he conducts in a certain manner; to another upon condition, that he follows a certain profession; and to another upon condition, that he performs certain services. The Testator always has a right to

make just such provisos or conditions in his Will as he thinks proper; and those to whom he makes devises must comply with his conditions, in order to become *fully* and *finally* entitled to them. God might have justly disinherited all mankind upon their first apostacy; but in mere mercy he has given large legacies to all true believers, who will comply with the conditions, which he has proposed in his new Testament. Let us now examine that sacred and precious Instrument, and see what terms he has therein specified, in respect to the full and final salvation of believers.

And here we find, in the first place, that God requires believers to *persevere* in faith and obedience, in order to obtain their promised inheritance. They must continue to love, to repent, to believe, to submit, to obey, and to perform the various duties, which he has enjoined upon them in his revealed Will. Christ repeatedly said to his disciples, "He that *endureth to the end*, the same shall be saved." And he much oftener promised salvation to those only, who shall faithfully fulfil their duty, and finally overcome all enemies and obstacles in the path to heaven. "To him that *overcometh* will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. To him that *overcometh* will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it. He that *overcometh* and *keepeth* my words *unto the end*, to him will I give power over the nations. He that *overcometh*, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and *I will not blot out his name* before my Father, and before his angels. To him that *overcometh* I will grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also *overcome*, and am set down

with my Father in his throne." Paul said to the believing Jew, "Behold the goodness and severity of God: on them that fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness; if thou *continue* in his goodness; otherwise *thou shalt be cut off*. He said to the Colossians, "You, that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable in his sight: *If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard.*" Many other similar passages might be mentioned; but these are sufficient to show, that true believers must overcome the world, endure unto the end, and finally persevere in faith and holiness, in order to take possession of the inheritance of the saints in light.

But, secondly, lest true believers should make shipwreck of their faith, and finally fall away, God has made a proviso in his revealed Will, which effectually secures their love, their faith, and their obedience to the end of life. He has promised to aid and assist them through their whole christian course. The Apostle Paul speaks with confidence to christians upon this subject. "Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also *sealed us*, and given the *earnest* of the Spirit in our hearts." Again he says in the same epistle, "Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given us the *earnest* of the Spirit. And speaking to those who had embraced the gospel and trusted in Christ, he says, "In whom also *after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.*" The apostle Peter likewise taught christians in general the



absolute certainty both of their finally persevering in holiness, and of their finally possessing their promised inheritance. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Thus God has abundantly promised to carry on the good work which he has begun in the hearts of believers, until the day of Jesus Christ. And this promise of the aid and earnest of the Spirit to the heirs of salvation, is a peculiar proviso in God's last Will and Testament. Other testators often propose conditions to their intended heirs, but never engage to make them actually perform the conditions proposed. This however, is essential to the design and form of God's revealed Will. If this article were not inserted, the legatees not only might, but certainly would fail of obtaining their eternal inheritance.

It must be further observed under this head, thirdly, that God has made a proviso in his Will, by which he retains his original right to chastise or punish believers, in case they prove negligent in duty or disobedient to his righteous commands. He expressly declares concerning his children in the eighty-ninth Psalm. "If they forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from them, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." And agreeably to this the Apostle asserts in the twelfth of Hebrews, that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every

son whom he receiveth." These are the conditions proposed in God's last Will and Testament, upon which all true believers are justified, pardoned, and accepted.

## IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from what has been said concerning the character and justification of believers, that they are still in a state of probation. Though in consequence of their justification, their probationary state is materially altered, yet it is by no means terminated. Before they believed, "they were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." But since they believed, "they are made nigh by the blood of Christ, and are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Before they became believers, they were upon trial, whether they would repent and believe the gospel; but after they have repented and believed, they are still upon trial, whether they will continue to exercise faith, repentance, and new obedience. Though they have the promise of divine aid and assistance to persevere in well doing, which renders their final salvation certain; yet this certainty does not put a period to their state of trial. It was certain before they believed, that they should believe; but that certainty did not put an end to their probationary state. So, since they have believed, the certainty of their persevering in faith, and love, and every holy affection, does not put an end to their probationary state. The reason is, their salvation is still suspended upon conditions; and these very conditions constitute a state of probation. Their state of trial is precisely the same, as if it were not certain, that they will finally perform the conditions upon

which their salvation is suspended. Christ himself was in a state of trial, while he was about his Father's business here on earth. His Father appointed him a work to perform, and promised him a glorious reward, upon condition of his finishing the work, which he had given him to do. He also promised to hold his hand and support him through all his labors and sufferings; so that it was infallibly certain that he should finish his work and receive his promised reward. But the certainty of his fidelity and obedience unto death, did not put him out of a state of probation. The case is exactly the same in regard to believers. Though they are justified, and have received the spirit of promise, which renders their salvation absolutely certain; yet they are still in a probationary state, because their salvation is suspended upon their fulfilling the conditions of their final and complete pardon. And the more certain it is, that God will hold them in his hand, guard them from danger, and assist them in duty; the greater is their *obligation*, as well as *encouragement*, to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, until they finish their course, and receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.

2. If God justifies believers upon the terms which have been mentioned; then it is easy to reconcile his conduct towards them in this life, with his perfect rectitude. He rebukes, and chastens, and scourges every son whom he receiveth. David declares, that "many are the afflictions of the righteous;" and this declaration we find verified every day and every where. Though these afflictions are fatherly chastisements, and designed to promote the spiritual benefit of believers, yet they are real punishments for sin. But how can God consistently punish them in this life, any more than in the next, if he *fully* and *uncondi-*

*tionally* forgives all their sins, at the time of their justification? When a prince completely pardons a rebellious subject, who has been fairly tried and condemned, he can never afterwards legally or justly punish him for his rebellion, which he has fully and finally forgiven. But if he only partially and conditionally forgives him, as Solomon did Shimia; he may punish him either less or more, according as his clemency and wisdom shall direct. All mankind are naturally rebels against God; but when they repent and believe the gospel, he does, by his last Will and Testament, partially and conditionally forgive their numerous acts of rebellion and disobedience, with a proviso, that he will chastise them for their past, present, and future sins, as often and as severely, as his glory, or their spiritual good may require. And according to this view of the doctrine of justification, there is no difficulty in reconciling God's fatherly chastisements of believers, with his covenant faithfulness. When he visits their iniquities with a rod in this life, he treats them not only as they deserve, but as he has expressly declared that he will treat them, in the very Instrument, by which they are justified. But if we should suppose with the Antinomians, that God does, at or before the time of men's becoming believers, fully and finally forgive all their past, present, and future sins, we could not avoid the absurd consequence which they draw from it, that believers after they are once completely justified, can do nothing either to promote, or to hinder their final salvation; which opens the door to perfect licentiousness. Or if we should suppose with the Arminians, that there is a first and second Justification of believers, we could not avoid the absurd consequence which they draw from it, that believers may finally fall away after their first justifi-

4. If believers, at the time of their justification, are only partially and conditionally forgiven; then it appears to be proper and important, that God should warn them to avoid every error and sinful course, and give all diligence to make their calling and election sure. They are still in a state of trial, in which they are always liable to be led astray from the path of duty, by the snares of Satan, the temptations of the world, and the remaining corruptions of their own hearts; and unless they escape these dangers, they cannot perform the conditions upon which their full forgiveness and final salvation is suspended. This God knows to be their trying and critical situation, and, for this good reason, gives them so many warnings to guard against their spiritual enemies, and so many exhortations to persevere in the practice of all the duties of christianity. It is as certain, that believers will fall away and be lost, if they neglect to perform the conditions upon which their title to eternal life is suspended; as it is, that sinners will be finally condemned and destroyed, if they neglect to repent and believe the gospel. If it be proper and necessary, that God should exhort sinners, to turn from their evil ways, to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life; then it is no less proper and necessary to exhort believers, to resist the devil, to overcome the world, to endure to the end, to take heed lest they fall, and to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. These exhortations to those who are justified, are perfectly consistent with their partial and conditional forgiveness, according to God's last Will and Testament; but upon no other ground. If they were completely and unconditionally forgiven, we could see no occasion for such divine exhortations and admonitions. The promise of persevering grace does not diminish,

but increase their obligation and encouragement, to live a holy, watchful, prayerful, and exemplary life. So the apostle Peter taught true believers in his day: "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to *glory* and *virtue*: *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises*; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

5. We learn from what has been said, that notwithstanding believers are but partially and conditionally forgiven, at the time of their justification, yet they may continually maintain peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. So long as they faithfully perform the conditions, upon which God has made them heirs to eternal life in his last Will and Testament, they may be assured, that he is reconciled to them,

and will afford them the tokens of his fatherly affection and gracious presence. Christ said to his disciples, just before his death, "Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world. Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, *and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*" While believers keep themselves in the love of God, and pay a cheerful obedience to all the intimations of his will, they perform the conditions upon which they are pardoned and justified, and enjoy that peace, which the world cannot give, nor take away. And upon this ground the apostle declares, "There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." So long as believers feel and express a filial spirit towards their heavenly Father, they may possess their souls in peace, and go on their way rejoicing in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, has promised to bestow upon all, who are faithful unto death.

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**¶** *Any Volume of Dr. Emmons's Sermons can  
be had separately of the publisher, No. 50, Cornhill,  
Boston.*  
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